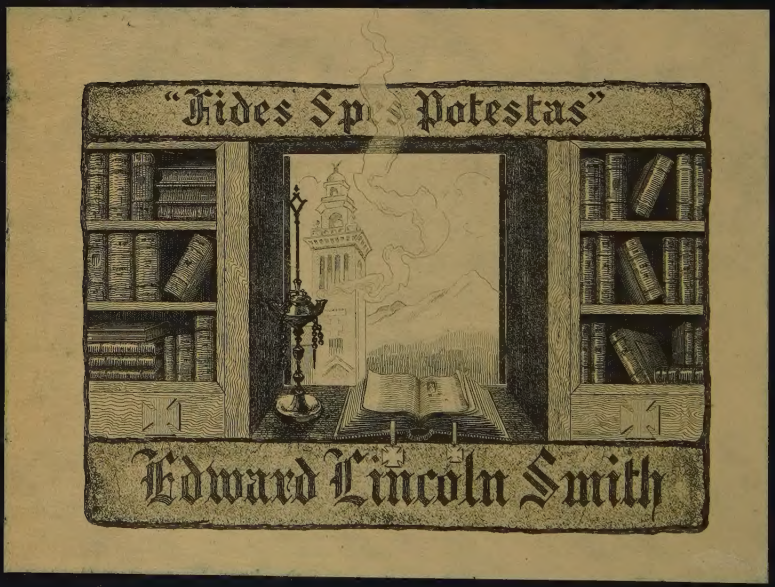

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THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

BY

DAVID W. FORREST, D.D.

EDINBURGH

THIRD EDITION

Unus est Magister vester; omnes autem vos fratres estis. ST. MATT. xxiii. 8.

Cum venerit Ille, Spiritus veritatis, docebit vos in omnem veritatem . . . de Meo accipiet et adnuntiabit vobis. ST. JOHN xvi. 13–14.

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TO

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PREFACE.

No one can discuss the question of Christ's Authority without addressing himself to that Christological problem, which, as the Abbé Loisy says, has been "la vie et le tourment" of the Church. With that problem the first two Chapters are more especially concerned. But my chief aim is a practical one—and to that I have devoted all the subsequent portion of the book—to set forth what I conceive to be the true nature of Christ's Authority over us in all that relates to our religious belief and our personal conduct. It appears to me that those who maintain a genuine historical Incarnation of the Son of God have not always sufficiently recognised the limitations inherent in an Incarnate life, nor how vital is the illumination of the Spirit, operating through the best activities of men's minds and hearts, for the discovery of what Christ's authoritative message really is. There is no religious problem, in my judgment, which more urgently requires consideration at the present time.

On a subject so central and so sacred one writes not without diffidence. But whatever value may attach to the views I express, it is only just to say that they have not been hastily adopted, but are the growing conviction of years. If I have succeeded in any measure in relieving difficulties felt by many as to what discipleship to Christ involves, I shall feel amply rewarded.

My cordial thanks are due to the Rev. R. D. Shaw, D.D., Edinburgh, and the Rev. James Kidd, D.D., Glasgow, for valued assistance in reading the proofs. I have also to express my obligations to the Right Hon. James Bryce for reading the manuscript of the Fifth Chapter, and for helpful suggestions.

D. W. FORREST.

MORNINGSIDE, EDINBURGH,
March 1906.

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THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I.

THE RECOGNITION OF CHRIST AS THE INCARNATE SON.

While the Authority of Christ has in all ages been acknowledged by the Christian Church as final, there has been a wide diversity of view as to what it really covers, and as to the right method of construing it. Yet surely it ought not to be impossible for those who own allegiance to Him as Saviour and Lord, to arrive at certain principles of judgment which would conduce to greater agreement in the conception of His Authority, and which would at least rule out some interpretations of it as arbitrary and unfounded. My purpose is to inquire both as to the Sphere in which it operates and as to its Character within that sphere.

I.

The Westminster Catechisms declare that the Holy Scriptures principally teach "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God

requires of man."[1] No better definition could be given of the revelation made by Him who is the heart and crown of Scripture teaching. Its subject is the salvation of man, and all that that involves with regard to the character and will of God, and the needs and possibilities of the human soul. But in this disclosure of spiritual truth Christ has occasion to refer to the personages of the Old Testament—to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to Jonah. How are these allusions to be understood? Are they introduced incidentally, merely with the view of illustrating and enforcing a spiritual lesson, and with no special bearing on the historicity of Old Testament incident or on questions of authorship; or have they an independent value as historical statements, carrying with them in that aspect an authoritative verdict? If we say that Christ's allusions are in themselves a guarantee of historical accuracy, we place Him in several instances in direct antagonism to the general conclusions of the most thorough and dispassionate research, and thereby create a very serious dilemma in many minds as to whether the acceptance of His authority is compatible with loyalty to truth in the region of historical evidence. If, on the contrary, we

[1] *Larger Catechism*, Quest. 5; *Shorter Catechism*, Quest. 3. Cf. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chap. i. 5. The VIth Article of the Church of England says more shortly: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to *salvation*."

hold that His references are not to be taken as guaranteeing Old Testament events, we have to give reasons why such a position does not impair His authority in the realm of spiritual truth. The problem is one of wide-ranging significance; for though it only directly bears upon Christ's knowledge of history, it really though implicitly involves the whole question of the limitations of His knowledge in what may be called the scientific sphere as opposed to the religious.

But, further, what is the character of Christ's authority in that sphere of faith and conduct which all Christians acknowledge as indisputably His?

(1) In what sense does He establish or attest to us the existence or the character of God? As He does not proceed by ratiocination, but by appealing to and quickening the moral intuitions and experiences of men, what inferences can we draw from His example as to the possibility of producing belief in God by speculative arguments, or by any process which leaves out of account the need of self-discipline and of a certain condition of character for the attainment of belief?

(2) In what sense is He the supreme Revealer of our Duty? When Tolstoy says that the Church, by failing to obey literally Christ's maxims regarding non-resistance and indiscriminate charity, is guilty of disloyalty to its Lord, is he rightly interpreting or is he misrepresenting

Christ's will? As Christ Himself frequently spoke in view of special circumstances, how far does this imply that we are unfaithful to Him when we simply reproduce His thought, without making allowance for the altered circumstances with which we are confronted? Again, is His *conduct* intended to be a model for imitation in such wise that we can solve the daily problems of our own life by asking, What would Jesus do? Or are there not many positions which we are properly enough called to fill, yet in which we could not, without irreverence, conceive Him to be placed?

(3) Does the authority of Christ apply equally in the sphere of personal and of corporate life? Or are there moral obligations imposed by Him on the individual which have not the same relevancy to the nation or its rulers as such?

(4) Christ's outlook on Human Destiny and the eternal Future is expressed in highly imaginative language, drawn largely from forms of thought prevalent in His age. Is it possible for us so to disentangle the fact from the imagery as to be able to say, This is the essential truth He declared?

(5) Lastly, while He invariably represented His own teaching as final, He at the same time foretold that after His departure His place would be taken by Another, who was to teach His disciples all things, yet whose function should be

not to add to the revelation which centred in Himself, but to make explicit that which it contained. In what sense do we affirm Christ's teaching to be final, if we also assert that it is in need of supplement? Under what conditions does this supplementary illumination of the Spirit become available? How far is the Spirit's working a purely spiritual experience, or correlated to all the other activities of man's nature?

Such are some of the questions to which it is necessary to seek an answer, if we are to make a well-grounded and intelligent appeal to the authority of Christ.

We can perhaps best approach the subject by asking, What is the note or differentia of His authority? Or to put it in another form, What are the qualities in Him which have led men to recognise Him as Son of God, and therefore entitled to supreme homage? Have they assigned to Him this place on the ground that He displayed such an encyclopædic range of knowledge with regard to all departments of human thought, and the events, past and future, of human history, as to suggest the possession of divine omniscience? No one with the Gospels in his hand would ever dream of saying so. Or is it on the ground that He manifested so transcendent gifts of intellect that the greatest geniuses of the world are not to be mentioned in comparison with

Him? So far is this from being the case, that we never think of ranking Him with the immortal philosophers and poets of mankind. If we did institute a comparison, we should have to admit that there are splendours of thought and imagination in Plato and Shakespeare to which He presents no parallel; but we should add immediately that the fact was wholly irrelevant, that He entered into no sort of rivalry with them, and shone in a sphere of His own.

It is not the philosopher but the prophet who verifies God to us; and he does so because he is not concerned with God as an idea, as a mere subject of thought, but with God as a reality in experience. He addresses himself to that in man which is related to a transcendent world; not to life as it is, but to life as it ought to be. Human thought in its highest flights is still imprisoned within the limits of space and time, and is thus at its best but a faint adumbration of the divine omniscience, which is the intuitive vision of the whole. But in the sphere of ethical necessity man is conscious of a relationship to what is unbound by earthly conditions, and asserts his kinship with the Eternal. Goodness in God and in man is at root the same; and the prophet by unveiling the imperatives and inspirations of the spiritual nature in man also unveils the divine as involved in them, their source and secret.

Christ as a teacher belongs specifically to the prophetic type. It is not by taking Him out of that category, but by recognising His supreme and solitary greatness in it, that we shall reach the right conception of Him. He reads human nature, both in its weaknesses and its possibilities, with such incisive and unerring insight, that God becomes the one ultimate and all-encompassing reality with whom we have to do. It is this which constitutes what we call the authority of Christ, that He constantly confronts us with an obligation which presses down upon us from the Unseen, which will not let us go; and yet which is not more an obligation than a privilege, since all our aspirations after a progressive goodness are in another aspect the gradual disclosure of a divine power working in us and with us. In no other way could God be really verified to us. If He exists at all, the primary truth in our relation to Him is not one of thought, but of life, of conduct. He is not really God to us, *our* God, so long as He is a mere idea, however true; He becomes our God only when He is recognised as bound up with our personality, at once the law and the animating principle of our being. Fundamentally, He must be felt by us as One who claims and deserves our allegiance, and to obey whom is to be ourselves. Knowledge of Him comes by obedience; vision, through character. Christ speaks with authority,

not primarily because His conception of God satisfies our thought, but because He quickens the impulses and resolves that impel us towards a divine communion.

Nor is it simply by what He says that He accomplishes this, but by what He is. The saint attests God no less than the prophet. He may have none of the prophet's gift of uttering new spiritual truth; but in the sphere appointed to him, however humble, he visualises and embodies the divine. His nature is radiant with the indwelling presence of God; and all who see him, unless their eyes be "holden," feel as if they "walked in hallowed cathedrals." Now if in His teaching Christ belongs to the category of the prophets, in His life He belongs to that of the saints, though here also as in the former case He occupies a place sovereign and apart. He combines in a supreme degree the characteristics of both. When we have said this, we have not told the whole truth regarding Him; but we have laid down the essential lines along which that truth can alone be reached. We have set aside what is really irrelevant in the reasons often adduced for the homage which He demands, and which the Church joyfully renders. For, as Pascal has said, Christ no more comes in the glory of the scientific or intellectual order, than He comes in the glory of earthly state; He comes *in His own order of*

holiness.[1] He Himself puts it all in one phrase, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." It is by the "spiritual splendour" of His words and of His character that He guarantees the divine. He is not "the Master of those who *know*," in the mere intellectual sense of the words, as Dante[2] applies them to Aristotle; but He is the Master of all who desire to know, that they may *be* and *do*.

Harnack has startled many people by declaring with emphasis that "the Gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, has to do with the Father only, and not with the Son."[3] In themselves these words might suggest that he regards the personality of Jesus as a matter of comparative indifference, as an accidental accompaniment of His revelation of God. That this is not his meaning is quite clear from his subsequent declaration, "It is not as a mere factor that He (Jesus) is connected with the Gospel; *He was its personal realisation and its strength, and this He is felt to be still*."[4] If that be so, then the assertion that the Gospel, as He spoke it, had to do with the Father only, is ambiguous, seeing that the "strength" goes out

[1] "Il n'a point donné d'invention, il n'a point régné; mais il a été humble, patient, saint, saint, saint à Dieu, terrible aux démons, sans aucun péché . . . *il est bien venu avec l'éclat de son ordre*." *Pensées*, ed. Garnier, p. 123. See the whole passage, which is full of beauty and insight.

[2] *Inferno*, iv. 131.

[3] Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 144.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 145.

of the Gospel when it is divorced from His personality.

Here, then, we touch the heart of the question. It is after the type of the prophet and of the saint that we have to conceive of Christ and of His attestation of God to us, and yet no prophet or saint is indispensable as Christ is to the validity of the truth He communicates. Why is it that neither the one designation nor the other, nor both together, are adequate to describe Him? What are the elements in His personality which differentiate Him from others who in their measure also reveal God, and which impel us to acclaim Him as verily the Incarnate Son?

These may be summed up in two words: (1) His Sinlessness, and (2) His Mediatorship or Lordship.

II.

I. *His Sinlessness.*—While Christ speaks as a man to men, and out of a deep sense of a common brotherhood, yet at the same time He does not occupy their standpoint. He addresses Himself to those who are outside the circle of right relations with the Father, but He Himself speaks from within it. The problem of reconciliation—*their* problem—of which His Gospel was the solution, did not exist for Him personally. Even if we take the Synoptics only, nothing shines out

more clearly in the records, and none the less clearly that the proof of it is, as it were, indirect. He does not stand forth and, separating Himself from others, exclaim, 'I am without stain before God.' He simply acts and talks as one to whom perfect obedience to the Father and undisturbed communion with Him is the most natural thing in the world, as if any other course were to Him inconceivable. It is quite true to speak of His "immense self-consciousness," but so far as the phrase suggests what is obtrusive and egoistic it gives a false impression. He moves quietly about among men, mingles with them in all the ease and variety of social relations, yet as one who breathes another atmosphere than they, who dwells in a region of unbroken serenity, at peace with Himself and with God. The holy love of the Father utters no word of forgiveness to His own soul, but it utters it through Him to others. His joy is not that of the son who has wandered and been restored, but of the son who has never left the Father's house. This is the mystery of Christ's sinlessness.

Yet it is needful to define exactly what we mean, when we apply this term to Him. It is the goodness that is realised and manifested under definite restrictions and conditions, not the goodness that is infinite and absolute. God cannot be tempted with evil. His holiness is not attained through struggle. It is His essential and

unalterable being. But it was not so with Christ. He lived His life within prescribed limits, passed through the ever-changing stages of human experience, and 'learned obedience' in each. He had His allotted task as one among many, even as we; had to choose His course, not with the plenary vision of the divine, but with bounded outlook, under the varied play of human emotion, and subject to all the influences of His immediate surroundings. Therefore, perfect though He was, His perfection was conditioned, not absolute; it was the perfection proper to Him at the time and in the circumstances in which He was placed. And being conditioned, it was, secondly, a derivative perfection. As His work was a vocation determined by the Father, so it was only by the continuous reception of the Father's grace that He was able to fulfil it. And the grace was given Him, as it is given to us, according to His need; but in His case alone it was never bestowed in vain, because in Him the spirit of surrender and response never failed. Hence His sinlessness means that He did not at any point of His progressive experience deflect from the specific ideal of service set before Him by God.[1]

Now it is contended by many that, no matter what the records of Christ's life seem to imply,

[1] On this point I may be permitted to refer to my *Christ of History and of Experience*, Lect. I.

such an achievement on His part is impossible in the very nature of things, and that on two grounds.

In the first place, they tell us that the moral perfection of a finite being is a contradiction in terms, because *finitude involves evil or moral imperfection.* A created spirit only realises its individuality through an inward strife implying action and reaction, failure and recovery. It learns by making experiments, by trying lines of activity that seem promising but prove ultimately disastrous; so, however truly its course may be upward on the whole, it is a zigzag ascent. It is in the shame and revulsion that follow from a false step that the impulse is born which bears us higher than before. And any other method, we are told, of conceiving moral progress in humanity is a dream.

But what reason is there for so confident an assertion? When we argue thus we are quite accurately describing the process of *our own* growth in goodness. We have travelled by that road. The very best of men have attained the height of their virtue through falls and repentances. But when we analyse their experience we see that, however universal, it is not inevitable. A man, say, yields to temptation, but despises himself afterwards; the better nature in him reasserts itself in protest and bears him triumphantly through a second temptation. But another

man of stronger type would have yielded to neither temptation; the first would have had no more power over him than the second. Hence the nobler a man is the less will he succumb to the onset of evil, and not only so, but the less fierce will the onset be, until what would have been a severe moral test to others is none at all to him; as a temptation it has ceased to be. Will anyone affirm that he is borne unscathed through this prolonged ordeal by virtue of the horror of evil which came to him as a revulsion from some long-past self-indulgence? A far more potent force is at work, which is not negative but positive, the love of righteousness which has grown within him, a higher affection expelling the lower. To assert that the source and spring of spiritual elevation are to be found only in the revolt from committed sin, is to mistake a part, and a small part, for the whole cause. The reaction, though it exists as a factor, becomes gradually less and less potent; it is almost absorbed at last in the passion for goodness. Knowing, then, how slight an element it is in some beautiful souls, how free they are from it compared with others, on what ground are we entitled to say that it is necessary at any stage, even the earliest and most immature? The inference is all the other way with regard to the *possibility* at least, which alone we are here discussing, of a sinless personality. The psycho-

logical analysis of human experience leaves the door open for the fair investigation of the facts as to the actual existence of sinlessness in any particular case. And still further,—as sin, by its very definition, is the thing which ought not to be—if we affirm a single disobedience to be indispensable to the knowledge or service of God, we land ourselves in the paradox that that which ought not to be is yet in some degree needful and unavoidable.

A finite spirit is, as such, ignorant of many things, but its ignorance does not in itself involve moral deflection. It has by the law of its being to grow and to learn; and as its outlook widens and its experience deepens new duties previously undreamt of reveal themselves. That it lacked the vision of them before is no proof of moral shortcoming. Human life is a succession of definite problems, created for us by a certain concurrence of circumstances, and the perfectly right practical solution of them would imply simply that a soul was completely possessed in vision and will by the Spirit of God. As fresh circumstances emerged, it would read them also in the light of the divine, and thus discover and acknowledge new obligations. But its progress would not be from bad to good, or from disobedience to loyalty, but wholly within the sphere of goodness, in the fuller apprehension, through the appointed discipline of life, of what the will

of God is. Seeing that this condition is just the *ideal* relation in which man stands to God, as his own consciousness testifies, it requires some hardihood to declare that it never in any instance can become *real* in a world which God governs.

The truth is, that this objection from finitude, though it professes to be inductive, is really deductive. A certain method is found to operate invariably within a wide range of facts; it is then used deductively to discredit other facts, instead of permitting these to bear their own witness, although that method even within its own range is repudiated as not inevitable by the deepest instinct of those whose experience yet exemplifies it.

But, secondly, it is argued, whatever might be the case in the abstract, or in a different world from ours, it is incredible that a man *forming part of the organism of our humanity* should thus be isolated from his brethren. He is built, so to speak, into a system; he is a sharer in a larger life, enters into a certain inheritance, and cannot escape the bias which affects everyone else. No one can imagine that the universality of sin in the race is an accident; it has a racial cause, and is connected with human solidarity. The Church is right, it is said, in speaking of "original sin," in so far as that means an inherent evil tendency in mankind which finds expression in every

individual; and to talk of this as eliminated or arrested in any single case is an absurdity.[1]

Now while it is true that all alike have sinned, it is an equally important truth that all have not sinned *alike*; that while in some the evil tendency has acquired a potency which seems to dominate the entire nature, in others it has been counteracted and suppressed till its influence is at a minimum. Moreover, there are those who appear to be born with a certain "whiteness of soul," a native purity that makes the conquest of temptation a relatively easy thing; and though not stainless, yet they turn instinctively to God as a flower opens to the sunshine. Sometimes they

[1] Mr. F. R. Tennant in his Hulsean Lectures on the *Origin and Propagation of Sin* contends that there is no such thing as "original sin" or an inherited evil bias in humanity; that man is born neither bad nor good, but "normal and neutral, and, influenced more or less according to circumstances by society, makes himself bad or good" (p. 222). The self-regarding impulses and emotions with which he starts as an infant are purely natural and animal, and only become selfish and sinful when they are permitted by the individual to dominate him after he has passed into the moral stage of self-determination. "This inheritance, universally received by individual men, is sufficient to reconcile the universality of sinfulness with individual freedom of will; and it implies that the human race is 'one great organic whole'" (p. 220). Mr. Tennant works out his thesis with great ingenuity, but with doubtful success. Even if his view of the genesis of sin be accepted, the objection to the possibility of Christ's sinlessness which I am here discussing would remain substantially as before, though the form of it would be altered. It would then be, not, How could Christ be free from the inherited bias to evil which affects all others? but, How is it credible that He alone of mankind was able, in spite of His social environment, to moralise all the natural impulses of His being?

enter the world through a descent which is nothing short of a surprise, because it suggests just the opposite of what they are. Heredity no more accounts for them in the moral sphere than it accounts for Shakespeare in the intellectual. It may be that if we knew all, it might largely explain both; but that would only prove that it is so mysterious in its operation, so complex in its combinations, that it passes the wit of man to trace its possibilities. Or we may hold that though in such instances heredity plays its part, the much larger factor is the new life given by God, and endowed by Him with latent capacities, which inheritance only modifies. On either theory, if the working of divine wisdom and power can so act as, whether directly or through long and various lines of hereditary influence, to realise an exceptional spiritual result, is it irrational to believe that it might so control human events and conditions as to produce a quite unique spiritual effect, provided the end to be thereby attained were adequate? But from the Christian standpoint the end in view was not merely adequate, but transcendently great, and for such a One as the Holy Father of spirits an imperative necessity, being nothing short of the revelation of His love in the recovery of lost children. Of course, if anyone denies that this conception of God is true, and insists that the whole problem be discussed on the basis of a

necessitarian evolution, then *cadit quæstio.* On that basis the existence of a sinless human life is an impossibility. But if the character of God be such as Christ declares, then the fact that there are souls that are born into humanity with a rare and astonishing affinity for goodness *does* lighten the difficulty that attaches to the appearance of a sinless life, by showing to us that in the sphere of man's relation to God unexpected and inexplicable results are actually produced, which yet it would be arrant folly for us to treat as the limit of the possible.

Thus the actual experience of mankind, when we examine its processes, does not warrant us, on the ground either of finitude or of the organic character of humanity, in ruling out *a priori* the idea of a sinless individual. It would be too much to say that it suggests or involves him, but it at least leaves room for him, and proclaims emphatically that our ability to imagine the conditions which give rise to a thing is no test of its objective reality. It shows that when it is a question of the character of an individual, we have no right to judge of him by generalisations, however broadly founded, drawn from the action of others, but *solely* by what the facts of his own life testify.

Now there is but one method by which a man's sinlessness can be demonstrated. It is impossible to prove by a detailed investigation that

every word he uttered, or every act he performed was for him at the time absolutely the right word or act; and it cannot be done in the case of Christ. For everything a man says or does is correlated to an infinite complexity of circumstances. In order to estimate it truly, we would need to know the particulars of his surroundings, how they came to be what they were, and what motives inspired his conduct. Manifestly all this is impossible for us: the data for a just judgment are not within our range. For instance, how can we show beyond dispute that, when Jesus made a scourge of small cords, and drove out them that sold and bought in the Temple Court, and poured out the changers' money and overthrew the tables,[1] His righteous zeal had no excess of passion in it? We can urge with force the frightful abuses which this trafficking created, and the desecration that it made of the Father's House. We can point out that Jesus was acting under the conviction of an exceptional mission as the vindicator of the old religion from its modern travesty, and as the founder of a new and higher faith. But we cannot with certainty establish that the ends He had in view were not attainable by more self-restrained means. What alone is the final justification of such an act? It is that *such a one as He* should have performed it without any subsequent regret.

[1] John ii. 14; cf. Matt. xxi. 12; Mark xi. 15; Luke xix. 45.

Do you maintain then, it will be said, that a man is himself the best judge of his own conduct, when it is the sheerest commonplace that men are every day deluded with the notion that they are acting wisely, while everyone but themselves sees their blundering; ay, and who insist to the last that they are right? To put such a question is to show a total misconception of the position. An abstract commonplace like this has simply no point; for everything turns on the quality of the self whose consciousness bears the witness. The higher it rises in the moral life, the chances of delusion grow less, just because it is coming nearer to the vision of the ultimate truth—the life of God. Therefore, when you have one like Christ who had the highest conception of God as holy love, who gave to the idea of man's obedience and consecration its last expression, and who Himself lived in the constant sense of the Father's presence; one, moreover, who had the keenest sense of what was due to men, of the need of charity and forbearance towards the sinful; then, even if conceivably He had been momentarily swept by righteous indignation beyond what was justifiable, one thing is certain, He would have realised the fact afterwards. In His calmer hours it would have risen up to judge and abase Him. But whether we place the incident of the Temple cleansing at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, as the Fourth Gospel does, or

according to the Synoptics at the close of it, or suppose that it occurred twice, the recollection of it never in the least impaired His consciousness of unbroken filial communion with God. And this incident is typical, for similar occasions of trial to temper and self-restraint must have constantly occurred. Yet when in His calmest and most solemn hours He reviewed His past action, He stood to the very end of His life self-vindicated before the Father.

There are some indeed who, while themselves believing in His sinlessness, hold that it cannot be established *historically* on the evidence of the Gospel records. Their contention is that the first three Gospels, which alone can be accepted as giving in any real sense a historical presentation of Jesus as He actually lived and spoke, are misconceived when they are treated as scientific biographies, and that they are rather evangelical tracts, dominated throughout by a special purpose. They are compilations consisting of selections from various accounts, oral or written, of the acts and sayings of Jesus, and the intention of the compiler was so to arrange his materials as to set forth the faith of the Church regarding Jesus as Messiah and Lord. In such circumstances they are not properly comparable with a biography written from the purely objective standpoint; for they not only interweave the interpretation with

the facts, but the facts themselves are chosen with the view of supporting the interpretation. Hence the Gospels portray Jesus not as He appeared to the disciples during the course of His ministry, but as they ultimately came to conceive of Him after the drama of His career had closed, and the outpouring of the Spirit had revealed Him in His risen power. This conception of Him, to which they attained later, so colours the Gospels as to make it impossible for us to treat them as historical documents in the usual sense.

Further, it is pointed out that these records are far from being a complete picture of His life and personality. After the story of His infancy, only one incident is recorded for thirty years;[1] and the ministry itself, lasting some two or three years, is presented only in the most fragmentary fashion. We have reports of what He said and did as a public teacher and healer, and of His general relations to the disciples whom He chose as companions; but we have practically no record of what He was in private. There are no such details of personal habit, or of those incidental conversations on the variety of human interests which disclose the man, as Sir Walter Scott is disclosed to us by Lockhart, or, above all, Johnson by Boswell. It is urged, therefore, that when we consider the length of the ministry,

[1] Luke ii. 41–52.

the comparative fewness of the incidents and addresses recorded, the almost total absence of illuminative particulars regarding His private life, we cannot fairly claim to possess the historical knowledge of His inner personality which would demonstrate His sinlessness.

If we are to attain conviction on that subject, it must be, we are told, by another method; by the same method through which the Apostles themselves reached it. How did *they* come to be persuaded of it? Not simply by what they saw of Him in the days of their earthly fellowship with Him. During that period they did not analyse the moral character of Jesus as we seek to do to-day, and directly infer from their experience of Him that He was without sin. What their experience led them to conclude and confess was that He was the Messiah. His Messiahship was the ruling thought in their minds. Now their conception of the Messiah was at first largely Jewish. The bondage from which He was to deliver was in great part external and national; and it was only through the death and resurrection of Jesus as interpreted by the Spirit that they came to see that the thraldom from which they needed deliverance was personal, inward, spiritual, and that *sin* was the fundamental problem which God's Messiah had to solve. They found that in Him God was reconciling them to Himself, not imputing to

them their trespasses. And as they were conscious that it was through Him that they gained pardon and the power of holy living, they were assured that He who had died for sin and rescued them from its thrall must Himself have known no sin. According to this view, the sinlessness of Christ is a judgment of faith, a verdict passed by those who had come to know the saving efficacy of His risen life. And as this was the path by which Peter and John gained their assurance of it, we can only gain it along the same line; and it is futile to seek to establish it by historical proof, apart from the spiritual experience that warrants and affirms it.

There is enough truth in such a theory to make it plausible; but radically it gives a false, or at least inadequate, analysis of the genesis of the Apostles' conviction. The declaration of Peter to the multitudes at Pentecost, repeated constantly by him in his later addresses, was that through this Jesus "whom ye crucified, but whom God raised up," is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. This was the invariable testimony of the Apostles concerning One with whom they had lived in the closest intimacy for many months, whom they had seen in every situation which could test His patience, temper, and unselfishness. They had more opportunities of truly knowing Him for what He was than Boswell had of knowing Johnson. That they have not

supplied us with the same minute touches of intimate companionship as Boswell does is not to the purpose. They themselves had these detailed memories of Him in their minds when they put forth the supreme claim that He had "died the just for the unjust," that He was "Jesus Christ the righteous." Does anyone imagine that when they thus affirmed His sinlessness they were speaking contrary to facts familiar to themselves, and that all the time they were suppressing defects in His character which they had observed, or acknowledgments of shortcoming made by Himself? Yet if Jesus had been conscious in the faintest degree of such shortcoming, that consciousness must inevitably have found expression daily in a thousand ways, not merely in direct confession, but in His attitude towards them, and in the tone of His references to the Father and His own relation to Him. The Apostles had no such recollections of Him. The claim they made for Him was the claim which, from the nature of their communion with Him, they had good reason to know He made for Himself. It is true that they did not during His ministry realise the full significance of His holiness, as they subsequently did when they saw the part that it played in the work of redemption. It was their spiritual experience of the emancipation that He had wrought out for them which enabled them to perceive with clear vision what they had

but dimly felt before. It gave them the true interpretation of the facts; yes, *but the facts concerning Him must have been such as to sanction and necessitate the interpretation.*

It is idle, therefore, to contend that we have now no means of arriving at the historical truth as to the perfect character of Jesus, and that the assertion of that perfection is purely a judgment of faith. We do really get historical evidence of the fact, because those who first preached redemption from sin through Jesus Christ were themselves in possession of just those minute data concerning His life which enabled them to judge what He was and what He thought of Himself. This historic confidence would not in the same measure have been possible for us, had Jesus simply gone about Palestine as a solitary itinerant teacher. But when He chose the Twelve that "they might be with Him," and thus bound them to Himself by the closest of fellowships, He provided for us the guarantee as to the character of His moral personality which a historical Christianity requires.

Seeing that historical affirmations are inherently involved in Christian faith, it is a grave mistake so to put the emphasis on the proofs derivable from the Christian consciousness of salvation as to disparage the element of historical evidence. To tell men that before they can attain the conviction of Christ's sinlessness, they must *first*

have experience of His saving power, is unavoidably to convey to them the impression that we are making a subjective feeling the ground for asserting a fact of history. What they want to be sure of is that they are dealing with an objective reality, and not with a blended product of emotion and imagination; and there is only one way in which this assurance can be gained. They have to be made to realise that, quite apart from the specific Christian consciousness, the moral personality of Jesus confronts them with a unique problem. No doubt certain subjective conditions are necessary before they can realise even this; but these are of a very general kind, and do not involve the typical experience of the believer. Any man of ordinary intelligence and of honest moral perceptions has, if he will, the power of recognising that such a one as Jesus could not refrain from confessing sin, if He felt He had any to confess; that such confession, if it occurred at all, affecting as it must His whole tone and attitude towards God and man, must have been known to the disciples; that if they knew of it, it was morally impossible for them to speak of Him afterwards as the sinless One and the Lord of glory; and therefore that no rational account can be given of the Gospels as we have them, unless on the hypothesis that the personality they depict was actually free from sin.

This conclusion, reached along the lines of

historical investigation, is not only prior to Christian faith, but is one of the chief factors in producing it. That personal faith, when it is attained, confirms and verifies it as a part of a whole of revelation, is quite true. It could not be otherwise. Just because the Holy Life had for its object a redemptive end towards mankind, they who have passed through a redemptive experience cannot but have a quickened apprehension of its reality and its glory. But we shall not make much progress in winning men to Christ unless we insist, first of all, on the unique personality which is there already in history, and which can be perceived as such by those who though not yet Christians allow their intelligence and their highest moral nature to judge. It is this recognition of His moral character as an exceptional and astounding fact which forms the basis of our appeal for the reasonableness of faith. For unless the faith which declares Him to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world be true, His presence in humanity as one separate from sinners becomes an inexplicable and almost irrelevant mystery.

If, therefore, we are to vindicate Christianity as a historical religion, we must maintain that the doubt or denial of Christ's sinlessness is not the result of a fair inquiry into the historical implications of the records, but rests on the *a priori* ground that as a man He like all others

must have learned obedience through shortcoming and penitence. Do those who take this view of Him realise what it involves? He who, having sinned, imagines himself stainless is on a lower moral level, is less in touch with the ultimate reality, less near to the heart of God, than he who sins and repents.[1] Will anyone say that St. Paul had truer self-knowledge than Jesus? People talk of "impossibilities"; but it has been demonstrated a hundred times over that the greatest of all impossibilities is to deny Christ's sinlessness, and yet form a self-consistent theory of His inward life. To make of the most marvellous personality in history an insoluble enigma, not because the facts require it, but on account of a principle or law which is arbitrarily erected into a test of reality, is neither science nor commonsense.

And it is the more irrational to do so, as the moral uniqueness which is thus cavalierly evicted as incredible, alone interprets for us one of the deepest needs of humanity. That which reduces to harmony, as nothing else does, the data of Christ's own life, also lightens up great tracts of human experience. Fundamentally, His sinlessness is not so much a problem, as the key to other problems; not a hopeless perplexity, but a mystery which shines by its own light, and

[1] "Faults? The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none." Carlyle, *Heroes*, Lect. II.

irradiates the dark places of the soul. It gives a definite and final answer to the question which lies at the root of all religion, What does the Holy One think of the sinner, and what attitude does He assume towards him? A good man, we know, does not simply mete out justice to the evil-doer; in proportion to his goodness, he strives to regain him to a better mind, to arouse in him self-condemnation and penitence; he shows forgiveness, patience, generosity. Just so far as he acts thus, does he become in our view God-like. But how have we come to treat this conception of God, and of God's relation to the sinner, as indisputable? We owe it to Christ. Apart from Him, we might indeed have dreamed that what we felt to be the best in us was a true indication of God's real nature. But doubts which we could not allay would inevitably have arisen. For how could we be sure that our long-suffering, our readiness to pardon the penitent offender, might not be due in large measure to our own sinfulness, to our inability to measure the true character of sin as it appears in the eye of the Holy One, to our own consciousness of shortcoming, and of the need of similar forbearance from others? We might discard such misgivings, but they would recur. What alone could remove them? Only the actual witness of a holy life, living itself out in self-sacrifice for sinners. Then only is our dream of God's merci-

fulness guaranteed as a reality. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" In themselves these words merely teach us to trust our highest instincts as a revelation of what God is supremely and incomparably; but their distinctive value is that they come from Him who speaks *from within the circle of holiness*. What others could only affirm as a probability, He corroborates and endorses as fact.

III.

II. *His Mediatorship or Lordship.* — The second element which differentiates Christ from all other prophets and saints is His claim to be the permanent mediator between God and men, especially in view of the astounding functions which He ascribes to His mediatorship. What, in a word or two, are some of these functions? 1. He assumes that He has a title to pronounce without appeal on the value of the Old Testament revelation, to separate what is eternal in it from what is temporary, nay, affirms Himself the fulfiller of it; and declares further that the revelation which He brings will never be superseded. "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall never pass away." Prophets and saintly men before Him were but servants.

He is the Son; and none can know the Father's will but he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him. 2. He makes attachment to Himself an essential condition of the spiritual blessing which He proclaims. He invites the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him that they may find rest. To love Him is the way to keep His commandments. It is when a man loses his life "for His sake" that he finds it, and the humblest service done "in His name" possesses an eternal value. 3. By the attitude which men take to Him their destiny will be determined. He is not only the law or standard of the final judgment: He is the Judge Himself. He opens and closes the door of the heavenly kingdom, for His knowledge of human character is unerring, and will unmask the hypocrite. The reward which awaits those who on earth have fed the hungry or clothed the destitute will be bestowed on them simply because the service they rendered to men was, whether consciously or unconsciously, done to Him.

It has been maintained that these and similar claims which stand in the very forefront of the Synoptic account do not really imply anything more than is involved in the historic sinlessness of Christ; that they simply indicate His unique filial consciousness, and are the expression of it in various aspects. He knew that He and He alone stood in a relation of perfect sonship to

the Father, that in Him alone was manifested the Father's ideal of humanity and the Father's purpose of grace towards the sinful, and that thus through Him alone could men in any age come to the knowledge of the Father and to true and full communion with Him. He speaks therefore not as a teacher who reveals truths about God, but as the embodiment of God's life in humanity and the guarantor of His presence and power; in Him God verifies Himself to us as Father and Redeemer. This consciousness of His centrality for the whole human race as the one perfect Son and mediator of the divine life so identifies Him with God that He might feel Himself warranted in saying, as the Fourth Gospel relates, not only, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," but also, "I and the Father are one." And so likewise His claim to be the bread of life, or the vine without which no branch can bear fruit, is but the expression in reference to mankind of His sense of mediatorship. Such language, it is said, is misconceived when it is taken to mean the metaphysical assertion of His Sonship. It does not refer to His pre-existence, and His place in the Godhead, but only to His supreme mission for humanity as representing and communicating the Father's life: and a similar meaning is held to attach even to those passages of the Fourth Gospel, which probably have a real historical basis, where He

speaks of His mystical union with believers. The pictures of the final judgment and of His function as Judge are the outcome of the same consciousness working partly under traditional religious forms. All He signified thereby was that the destiny of human souls would be determined by their attitude to Him by whom the Father's grace is mediated. In this sense He is Standard and Judge in one.

Now I am not prepared to deny that such a rendering has great elements of truth in it; and it is only right to acknowledge that its *intention* is not to minimise or lower the unique character of Christ's function as Saviour, but to interpret it, to show precisely what its nature is as conceived and portrayed by Himself. It has no real affinity with the ordinary Unitarian view of Christ's relation to His mission, but is as really penetrated with the supernatural as the Nicene doctrine. It holds that He is not simply one, even the greatest, of the prophets of God; He is the one supreme Revealer, and no possible comparison can be instituted between Him and others. He not only utters the thought of God, He *incarnates His life*, which through Him communicates itself to mankind as a redeeming and renewing power: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." And in its insistence on treating the words of our Lord regarding Himself as spoken primarily in a reli-

gious rather than a metaphysical sense, it seems to me to be exegetically correct, and to give a true reading of His actual consciousness. Nor would I dispute the possibility that the Christian experience of forgiveness and of regeneration may be wrought in a man, who through the records of Christ's life feels himself to be in contact with One in whom, as a historical person, God verifies His gracious presence, and through whom He imparts and establishes His saving power in the soul. But what I gravely doubt is whether, even if such inward renewal can happen on these conditions, the conception of Christ's personality that is here involved can be permanently satisfying, and whether the inward renewal itself has adequate depth of content.

1. In the first place, according to this view Christ is so identified with God that for us they are inseparable. The highest activity of the divine is, so to speak, pent up in this channel. We cannot truly know the Father, we cannot come into any right relations with Him at all, except so far as we find Him, or rather except so far as He finds us, in Christ; and however far we may advance in spiritual experience, however fully we may enter into the divine communion, Christ remains as essential as before. Nay, even if we attempt in any measure to conceive a future blessed destiny for humanity, He still retains His centrality as the perpetual mediator,

the luminous medium of our vision of God. But if this be so, is it not infinitely more credible that He who possessed this pre-eminence of function should hold a relation to the Father differing from ours in kind and not merely in degree; that He should be an incarnation of what is inherently divine, than that He should be simply a historical human personality of whom we can only say that it pleased the Father thus to endow and exalt Him? It is true, indeed, that He always represents Himself as but a *means* to an end, as the *Way* to the Father; but then He is such a means, so basal and all-inclusive, that the means has to be thought of in the same category with the end. Or, to put it otherwise, if the personality of Christ alone attests and conveys to us the Father's life as a redeeming power, if through it alone we truly know and possess God, the noumenal and finally real, then it is impossible to treat that personality as itself a mere historical phenomenon. The phenomenon of a sinless manhood, of a perfect filial will, is only conceivable if the noumenal lay behind it and within it. Not that the noumenal in Christ, the essentially divine, is discerned at any point as something separate from or lying alongside the phenomenal; it appears as phenomenal, but it gives the phenomenal such unique significance and result as to suggest and guarantee absolute reality. The divine is never there pure and

simple, either in words or acts, but always clothed in the human, working through the processes of human thought as truly as it expresses itself in human language. Therefore it is quite right to say that when Christ declares, "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son,"[1] He is speaking as the Son of Man and from within His own human experience, not from the standpoint proper to the eternal Logos as such.[2] The primary reference of the words is not to His pre-existent life, but to what He actually was in humanity and for humanity as the one ultimate revealer of the Father. But the more we realise what is involved in the latter, the more does the former assert itself as the indispensable ground and explanation, without which in the end the other must inevitably slacken its hold upon us.

2. But secondly, not only will the consciousness of a real reconciliation and new life in God, created through contact with Him who is no more than the historic manifestation of the Father, fail in the end to maintain itself, but even at its best it does not carry the special content which belongs to faith in the eternal Son. A sinless personality guarantees to us, as has been already shown, the attitude which the Holy

[1] Matt. xi. 27.

[2] On this point see Moberly's able discussion in his *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 100, 184 ff., 212–213.

One takes to the sinful—His forgivingness and gracious purpose. But if we regard Christ only from this historical standpoint, what He presents to us is the very extremity of *human* self-sacrifice —the boundless self-surrender of a human soul to the will of the Father in the service of man. In this, indeed, He images God to us; for it is by the Father's appointment that He appears, and it is through the Father's grace that He is borne on to victory. Hence we can say indubitably that the Father's heart is here revealed to man as nowhere else. Yet the impression thus produced upon us by Christ is, though unique, of the same *type* with that which we receive from all high and saintly souls. They suggest God, or even attest Him—Christ mediates His saving power. But they both speak of human self-sacrifice, rather than of divine. God sympathises with them, ordains their lot, calls them to this service and upholds them in it. But we cannot tell how far what we term sacrifice is implied in the divine action. We see what the Holy Life cost on the human side; and cannot but believe that the outflow of redeeming love of which it assures us cost something to God. But was the cost, though greater in degree, not analogous in kind to that which the divine heart may be supposed to suffer in the case of every pure and self-denying human life? Wherein lay that pain of surrender which calls

out the wondering awe of the Apostle, when he exclaims, "He that *spared* not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"? Now the very fact that the phenomenal or historical conception of Christ's person and work makes such a question possible, is convincing proof that in the spiritual renewal which it professes to conserve something is lacking to the full Christian experience. A man may be restored to the true fellowship of God, may be reconciled and regenerated, by the method it unfolds; but the depth and riches of God's love can never be conceived aright by him who does not know something of the unspeakable surrender which *God Himself* made in order to achieve the reconciliation. Without this, sin is not seen in its essential darkness and destructive force, and the mercy of God loses for us its irresistible attraction and final glory.

This is a matter of supreme moment; for it may be confidently said that just here, above all, lies the stress of the apostolic message. The last and imperative ground of the Apostles' appeal is that such was the passion of the divine heart for man that it went all lengths of sacrifice for his redemption; that for this end it freely yielded up what passes the mind of man to conceive. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son": that is their thought of the Father. "Who though He was rich, yet

for your sakes became poor": that is their thought of Christ. Yet these are not two thoughts, but one, the mystery of Godliness—that the self-sacrifice of Christ is a self-sacrifice *on the part of the divine nature*, and that it consists not simply in what, as the Son of Man, He suffered, but supremely in what He abandoned that He might become man. It is this which subdues and overwhelms the Apostles, which endues them with power as bearing the seal and warrant of the Highest, which convinces them that their labour is not in vain in the Lord. It is this which has been the dynamic force in Christian preaching throughout the ages; and if the Church comes to treat it as a matter of phraseology and not as the central point of its witness, it will denude its message of that which wins and compels the heart of humanity. That in everything Christ says and does He moves along the lines and within the sphere of humanity is not the disproof of His divinity; it is the proof of what the divine truly is, in that out of its longing to regain the unworthy it imposes upon itself such limitations. Here we touch bottom. We may talk as we will of the love of God for sinners, but if love does not mean for Him sacrifice as it means for us, and in a sense infinitely transcending ours, then it fails to answer our ultimate question and to meet our inmost necessity.

IV.

I have thus far not spoken of Christ's resurrection. And yet everyone knows that it was through their belief in it that the Apostles came to their faith in His eternal Sonship. But I have purposely confined myself to the revelation given in His life to show that it essentially involves the transcendence of His personality, that it really discloses to us the very nature of the Divine Being. Still, historically, the realisation of this was only borne in on the first disciples through their conviction that the Crucified had risen again, and that as reigning Lord He had bestowed on them the new life, the Spirit of Power, of which they subsequently became conscious. This does not by any means imply that it was the resurrection or what followed it, taken by itself, which demonstrated His inherent Deity; it had this power simply because it pointed back to the historic life which they already knew, interpreted for them what was till then the greatest of mysteries, and lit up into clearness the dim perceptions of their hearts. It gave them the key to a problem already existing.

Our faith to-day comes by a different process. The fact of the resurrection, which was the determining element with them, is not cognisable in the same way by us. It does not come as a historic reality within the range of our direct knowledge.

We reach it through the testimony of others. No doubt it may be said that our Christian experience as truly as Peter's or John's verifies our fellowship with a risen Lord whose Spirit dwells in us. We can have the same consciousness as they of spiritual renewal and quickening. But that experience of theirs had a characteristic which is not present in ours. It was definitely connected with a fact which they knew, of which they were as certainly persuaded as of their own existence. *They had seen the empty tomb, and the risen Christ.* Their faith was a *dual* product, and sprang from the blending of these two factors, knowledge of an event and consciousness of spiritual power. As we cannot know the event as they did, has it lost all validity for us? By no means; but it becomes for us a question not of knowledge, but of belief. And there are two great reasons which make it credible. (1) The transformation that passed over the Apostles within a brief period of Christ's death, measured rather by days than weeks, is explicable if the resurrection were true, but on no other hypothesis. Without such an overpowering and dominant fact the swift rise of Christianity is an enigma. (2) There is a fitting correlation between the unique life laid down, and the unique resumption of it. If the personality of Christ as manifested in His ministry had the solitary significance just described, then it is in

the highest degree probable that it was not holden of death as it had not been holden of sin, and that it guaranteed its triumph by real appearances to those who had formerly beheld its spiritual splendour.

The Apostles interpreted the life by the resurrection, and found it truly divine; we approach the resurrection through a life which already attests itself to us as that of the Son of God. Our belief that Christ rose from the dead is subordinate and indirect, but nevertheless His resurrection enters in as an additional corroboration of that faith in His eternal Sonship to which the phenomena of His life pointed: it is recognised as a new fact forming part, to use words which I have employed elsewhere, "of the same *objective* divine manifestation in humanity."[1] Thus for us also as well as for the Apostles, He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead."[2]

V.

Of course in thus affirming Christ's eternal Sonship we speak *secundum hominem*. Human thought works through forms and conditions that do not exist for the divine. The absolute

[1] *The Christ of History and of Experience*, p. 165.
[2] Rom. i. 4 (R.V.).

truth as it is in the mind of God is beyond our measure. What we have to do is to see that the ideas which we employ are as near an approximation as we can make to the transcendent reality.[1] The question therefore is not as to their perfect adequacy, but as to their fitness to suggest some relatively true image of that which in its absoluteness is to us inconceivable. Thus, for example, we apply without hesitation the term 'person' to God, though quite aware that from its ordinary connotation it has misleading associations, and that self-consciousness in the Infinite Being must be far other than what it is in His finite creatures. But we feel that to ascribe personality to Him is at least to *look in the direction of the final truth regarding Him*: to refrain from doing so is radically to misconceive Him. We must either assert or deny it; there is no middle course, if we are to think of God at all: and we assert it, meaning that what constitutes personality in us exists *via eminentiæ* in God, without the negative elements which are inseparable from it in our experience.[2]

[1] R. H. Hutton says of Bagehot, "Within the last two or three years of his life, he spoke on one occasion of the Trinitarian doctrine as probably the best account which human reason could render of the mystery of the self-existent mind." Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, vol. i., Memoir, p. 17.

[2] See Lotze's masterly argument to the effect that "in God alone is perfect personality to be found, while in all finite spirits there exists only a weak imitation of personality. The finiteness of the finite is not a productive condition of personality, but rather a

In like manner, when we designate Christ the Son of God, and talk of His eternal generation, we are not claiming speculatively to know God as He is, and as He is known to Himself; we are using language which for us gives the nearest equivalent of the inner reality of His being. These expressions are in one sense metaphorical, but they are metaphors that represent the fact believed, which in its inwardness and totality is unimaginable; and by using them, we mean that they afford to our heart and reason something of the same significance which that fact has for God. It is not enough to say that they are subjective judgments, any more than it is enough to say that the ascription of personality to God is a subjective judgment; in both cases the judgment is held to have a real, though not perfect, correspondence to *objective* truth. Hence, to affirm merely that Christ has "the value of God" is no sufficient statement of the character of our conviction, because it is an ambiguous expression. It might mean that while we do *not* regard Christ as veritably divine, He is yet so indispensable for the true knowledge of the Father that we resolve to treat Him as if He were such. But emphatically this is an impossible

hindering barrier to its perfect development." *Mikrokosmos*, Bk. x. chap. 4. Cf. also Ritschl, *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, vol. iii. § 30; A. C. Fraser, *Philosophy of Theism*, Gifford Lectures, 2nd Series, pp. 149–153.

position, it is an attempt at make-believe, which sooner or later is doomed. If He is to have "the value of God" for us, it must be because we believe it is true to call Him divine, just as we believe it is true to call God a person, though in both cases we are conscious that our terminology is only approximative, an adumbration of the eternal fact.

That it is approximative, not exact, does not make it for us the less final or authoritative. It is the intellectual equivalent or inseparable concomitant of our spiritual experience. The love of God ceases to have any meaning for the heart, if He ceases to be a person to the mind; and if Christ is not indeed the eternal Son to our thought, He cannot have His full saving efficacy for the soul. The religion which moves in a sphere of pure subjectivity, and will not admit that our confessedly inadequate conceptions give us any true suggestion of the transcendent reality within the veil, practically ends in an agnosticism which treats religion as a dream. It is a grave delusion to suppose that our spiritual convictions have no essential relation to fundamental intellectual categories; that we can play fast and loose with the latter, or even abstain from using them altogether, and yet retain the former at their highest intensity. Human intelligence is a unity; and the religious conviction is weakened and starved, and if it survive at all, dwindles into

sheer sentimentality, when its correspondent intellectual form is denied. The faith, therefore, which asserts that Christ's life means for the soul a sacrifice offered by the very nature of God at infinite cost, inevitably goes on to confess with the universal Church that Christ is the everlasting Son of the Father, "who for us men and for our salvation was made man." To call Him God is true; to call Him man is true; to call Him either exclusively is false. The authority which belongs to Him is not that of God in His absoluteness; but of God manifested in humanity, of the Word made flesh, for the purpose of revealing God to man and of reconciling man to God.

CHAPTER II.

THE ILLEGITIMATE EXTENSION OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY.

The sinlessness of Christ and the relation in which He was conscious of standing to God, to man, and to human sin, constrain us to confess His essential Deity. Any acknowledgment which falls short of this, which does not recognise that He was in a transcendent sense one with the Father, and that His self-sacrifice meant a sacrifice undergone by the divine nature itself, fails to do justice to the significance of His personality.

I.

It is, then, His unique *spiritual* glory as Son of Man that leads us to recognise Him as the incarnate Son of God. But this does not entitle us to use the category "Son of God" in the abstract, and, arguing deductively from that, to ascribe to Christ all the attributes connoted by it. For the problem we have to solve is a concrete one, the right interpretation of a historical

life. That the eternal Son *as such* possesses the properties of Godhead—omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence—does not in the least prove that He possessed them *as incarnate.* Whether He did so or not is a question of the recorded evidence. As it is from the Gospels alone that we derive our conviction of Christ's Deity, so the Gospels alone must decide what Deity signified in His incarnate experience.

There is no better illustration of the way in which the Church has outrun its scriptural warrant than the Christological definition given by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. "Our Lord Jesus Christ," it declares, "is to us One and the Same Son, the Same perfect in Godhead, the Same perfect in Manhood . . . acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the natures being in no way removed because of the union, but rather the properties of each nature being preserved and concurring into one Person and one Subsistence."[1] The fundamental purpose of the Definition is to safeguard the *actuality* of the Incarnation. So far as it does this, it is borne out by the facts. But it outruns them altogether in its statement of the method and conditions of the Incarnation. Nor is it difficult to see how

[1] See Bindley, *Œcumenical Documents of the Faith*, pp. 233, 240–242. Cf. Schaff, *Creeds of the Greek and Latin Churches*, pp. 62–65.

the Church was led to this misconception. The central article of its faith was that Christ was true God and true man; and this had been challenged in both its parts, both by those who held that He was less than God, and by those who denied that He was real man. The Church, therefore, affirmed that He had the nature of God and the nature of man, each with its respective attributes in full perfection. Manifestly, as regards the divine nature as it existed in the person of Christ, this is an over-assertion. The Gospels warrant the belief that He who lived and died as Jesus of Nazareth was none other than the Word made flesh; they do not warrant our ascription to Him of all the prerogatives that belong to His Godhead. By ascribing these to Him, the Church meant to maintain His identity with the eternal Son; but it was really thinking of Him in His absolute, not in His incarnate, state. Anyone can see that the Definition is not written "with the eye on the object," which is the incarnate life itself; that it is really controlled by abstract conceptions of Godhead and Manhood, which it proceeds to develop to the utmost, and then dogmatically affirms their coexistence in the unity of the Person. Consequently, as it was the divine nature in Christ which made Him a problem for men, it was that side which was more and more emphasised in the general thought of the Church. The official pronouncement that

He possessed all the "properties" of Godhead determined the whole construction of His life. That was the fact to be conserved at all hazards: and so for centuries, notwithstanding the Church doctrine of the dual nature, as stated in the Chalcedonian Decree, there was an ever-increasing tendency to the Doketic view of Christ's humanity.[1]

Under these conditions the position to be taken up relatively to our Lord's authority as a teacher was clear. Possessing in His Incarnation every property of Deity, He always spoke in full view of an absolute and divine knowledge, however much He might restrain it in His communications to men. The limitations which He imposed on Himself were apparent, not real; and were assumed only for the purposes of adaptation to the weaknesses of His hearers. Thus Cyril explains our Lord's saying regarding His ignorance of the End[2] as meaning that, though He knew it, He was not authorised to declare it. "When His disciples would have learned what was above them, He pretends for their profit not to know, inasmuch as He is man, and says that not the very angels knew, that they may not be grieved at not being entrusted with so great a mystery."[3] Indeed, there is no more

[1] Cf. Gore, *Dissertations*, p. 166.

[2] Mark xiii. 32.

[3] *Adversus Anthropomorphitas*, chap. 14. Cyril's words are σκήπτεται χρησίμως τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι, "He pretends usefully (or, for their profit) not to know." See the catena of passages from Cyril in Bruce's *Humiliation of Christ*, pp. 366–372.

striking example of the art of explaining away, in the interest of an abstract principle, than the patristic interpretations of this saying of Christ. Not one of the great Fathers admits the reality of His ignorance, though there is an ingenious variety in the methods of escape; some holding that He spoke as man; others, as the Head of His body, the Church; others, that He knew the End both as God and as Man, but that it was not among the things which He was commissioned to reveal.[1] All the other passages in the Gospels that suggest a true human limitation of knowledge are dealt with by the Fathers in the same manner,—His growth in wisdom during childhood and youth, His changing emotions, His expressions of surprise, His inquiries as to facts. No one would now dare to account for these manifestations on Cyril's hypothesis, that Christ pretended for the disciples' good to be other than He was. The favourite method of those who wish to keep as much in line with patristic teaching as possible, is to draw a sharp distinction between the two natures, and to assign all indications of a restricted knowledge to what is called His "human mind." Where it is said "He came to know" or "when He heard" this or that, we are told that this is a true description of His experience as man, though all the while

[1] For an interesting summary of the various Patristic explanations, see Powell, *Principle of the Incarnation*, pp. 422–433.

His omniscience as God remained; and that it does not subtract from the reality of His learning by observation that "He possessed a different kind of knowledge already which covered the same field."[1]

On this whole method of interpretation two remarks have to be made. 1. It is quite "unscriptural," as Bishop Westcott says, "though the practice is supported by strong patristic authority, to regard the Lord during His historic life as acting now by His human, and now by His divine nature only."[2] What He does, He does with His whole personality. It is the same unity of personal life which is present throughout. This is the unquestionable impression left by the records. In no case does He speak or act merely as God or merely as man, but in all cases as God manifest in flesh.[3] "He is not two, but one

[1] Hall, *Kenotic Theory*, p. 200; and pp. 196–197: "Our Lord appears in the Gospels as being at once finite in knowledge as touching His Manhood, and omniscient as touching His Godhead." He "possessed two knowledges, one universal the other partial." Cf. also Powell, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

[2] *Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 66.

[3] See Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 94–96. Bishop O'Brien says: "When it is said that, at one and the same time, He knew the day of judgment as the Word, but was ignorant of it as Man; or that while He knew it, as regarded His Divine Nature, He was ignorant of it, as regarded His Human Nature; or that His Divine Nature knew it, but His Human Nature was ignorant of it; we are, in reality, though not in words, supposing Him to be made up of two Persons." *A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the United Dioceses of Ossory, Ferns, and Leighlin, October 1863*, p. 104.

Christ." 2. Apart from its illegitimacy, this divisive method is of no practical avail. Confessedly, what we desire to discover is the revelation which God has been pleased to give us in Jesus Christ. We see that in certain instances Christ is represented as characterised by limitations. Of what value is it to say that, while these existed for Him in one sense, they did not exist in another? The sphere in which they did *not* exist is, *ex hypothesi*, outside the range of the revelation. As interpreters of the message conveyed by the Incarnate Son, we have nothing to do with it; but we have everything to do with giving full weight to all the elements, however strange, which that message contains.

The writers who have chosen this line of argument, and who are under the impression that they thereby show exceptional reverence for the faith once delivered to the saints, have forgotten the warning note sounded by Butler in his *Analogy*. No book on the problems of Christian belief, published though it was more than a century and a half ago, and in an age of arid religious thought, is more valuable to-day as setting forth the right attitude of the seeker after truth. "As we are in no sort judges beforehand," he says admirably, "by what laws or rules, in what degree or by what means it were to have been expected that God would naturally instruct us; so upon supposition of His affording us light

and instruction by revelation, additional to what He has afforded us by reason and experience, we are in no sort judges by what methods, and in what proportion it were to be expected that this supernatural light and instruction would be afforded us."[1] History shows that the violation of this canon of investigation is the abiding temptation and recurring blunder of all schools of religious thought. The Jews missed the vision of the Messiah when He appeared, because they were certain they knew "by what methods" God would interpose for their deliverance, and scouted the idea that the Anointed of the Lord would come without the credentials of external splendour and kingly authority. Roman Catholicism thinks it knows "by what methods" God would declare His will, regards it as plainly absurd that He would vouchsafe a revelation recorded in a book without granting us an authorised interpreter of it, and so is swept into all the extravagances of Papal Infallibility. Protestantism in many of its forms is equally certain that *it* knows the proper conditions and methods of God's self-manifestation, repudiates the notion of an infallible interpreter, but insists on a literally infallible record as indispensable, and carries on a hopeless struggle against physical science, biblical criticism, and comparative religion. In all these cases a certain truth is laid hold of, and is used as a controlling

[1] *Analogy*, Pt. ii. chap. iii. p. 166 (Edition by J. H. Bernard).

conception; then a whole system is built up on this basis. Up to a point the mind is open; beyond that the facts of history and experience are only accepted so far as they accord with the ruling idea. This is precisely the position of those who, having rightly inferred from the Gospels the Deity of Jesus, proceed forthwith to make it the governing principle, and, treating it in its abstractness, draw a long train of deductions, till they completely lose sight of the original facts from which the belief in His Deity grew. It is an extraordinary view of reverence for the will of God which leads one to pick and choose parts of a revelation, while he shuts his eyes to the remainder, or keeps them open only to find ingenious reasons for explaining it away. If we take the Gospels as they stand, they contain as indubitable proof of the limitations of our Lord's thought as of His consciousness of Divine Sonship; and we are no more serving the interests of truth when we deny the former than when we deny the latter.

"To assume ignorance," says Mr. Powell, "in the human mind of Him who, being what He was, certainly might have had His human mind furnished with all knowledge which a human mind is capable of receiving, and to assume this without any proof of the assumption, but on the contrary, in the face of all probability and of much evidence that the case was otherwise, in order to get rid of a

difficulty, seems, not to say more, thoroughly unscientific."[1] On the unscripturalness and irrationality of the phrase, "His human mind," as if in the unity of Christ's person it lay in juxtaposition with His divine mind, enough has already been said. There was but one mind, that of the Word made flesh. Now it may be frankly admitted that the incarnate Son *might* have possessed all the knowledge that a human mind is capable of, that it *might* have pleased the Father to endow Him with every capacity and acquirement of human thought, so that the learning and wisdom of all the ages past and present would have lain before Him like an open book, though of this vast treasure-house He only unfolded so much as was necessary for the redemptive purpose He came to fulfil, or was adapted to the intelligence or the need of those with whom He had to deal. This would probably be our conception if we were called to forecast the conditions under which the Incarnation would be realised. And what leads us to surrender it is not any arbitrary "assumption" on our part, as Mr. Powell suggests, but the recognition that the Incarnation *has* taken place, and that these were *not* the conditions of it; that it is there in history in quite another form than we should have anticipated; that, in short, our expectations regarding the Redeemer's range of knowledge

[1] Powell, *Principle of the Incarnation*, p. 459.

would have been as far astray as those of the Jews were regarding His outward station in life. It is hardly a mark of "scientific" investigation to cling to a hypothesis, however plausible, when it is refuted by the facts.

II.

Nothing surely is more obvious than that the Scripture records assign to Christ a place in humanity in a definite historic succession. The traditional view at once proclaims that truth, and proceeds practically to empty it of its meaning. It tells us that the entire Old Testament period was but a preparation for His advent, that the course of Jewish history and the utterances of the prophets led up to Him, that the chosen people were guided and disciplined by God that they might recognise Him when He appeared. But, while it affirms this succession in which He stood, it affirms it only in reference to the Jews and to the communication of His message to humanity, not to Himself as an individual. He, as the Son of God, retaining all His divine attributes, would have been just the same though born into a Gentile race; would have known just as much as He did about God's dealings with Israel, and the goal to which they pointed. The only difference would have been that His hearers would have been incapable of understanding His message;

they would have had no background of spiritual experience which would have enabled them to interpret it. Therefore it was necessary, not for His sake, but for theirs, for mankind, that He should come in the line of Moses and the Prophets, for there alone was the soil prepared for His sowing.

It is little to say that this is not the picture that confronts us in the Gospels. They present to us One who was emphatically a child of Israel; whose birth as the son of Mary meant that He was not only surrounded from His childhood by the influences of Jewish life and thought, but that they specifically determined the form of His own intellectual and moral development; that they were no mere external wrappings, encasing a soul that grew into full possession of itself independent of them, but the very feeders of that growth, and so essential to it that under no other circumstances would He have been what He was. Of course, the greatest factor in His life lay behind all this,—Himself, His personality, His individual gift and quality, which absorbed the influences that beat upon it, so far as they ministered to its fuller vitality. It is this given quantity, this mystery of the personal datum, which is the final secret in Him as in all men, and which in His case set Him apart from others supreme and unapproachable. But, for His *self-realisation* He was as dependent as they on

external conditions. He was not created by His environment: no man is; but the environment was needed to make Him possible. A Jesus Christ born and reared in the midst of heathenism is as inconceivable as a Milton in the midst of barbarism. It is an extravagance to declare, as Godet does, "As a philosopher He (Jesus) would have surpassed Socrates; as an orator, have eclipsed Demosthenes. The substance and the form of His teaching both prove it."[1] If such language is intended to suggest that the utterances of our Lord show an intellectual mastery so versatile that, had He been placed in other circumstances and with a different training, He would have excelled the greatest minds in any sphere of thought, then it is a pure speculation, and has no more value than the usual prophecy regarding a powerful personality, that, if he had enjoyed certain academic advantages, he would have shown himself the greatest of scholars, or that, if he had chosen political life, he would have been the most brilliant of statesmen. Predictions of that kind as to the "might-have-beens" are as safe as they are futile. But if it is meant that Jesus *actually possessed* in the fullest measure the analytic gift of Socrates and the "dæmonic" eloquence of Demosthenes, and simply refrained from exercising them, one can only reply that the proof is still to seek. One

[1] Godet, *Defence of the Christian Faith*, p. 218.

might as well say that He could have painted like Raphael or composed like Beethoven. History shows that, normally speaking, the great distinctive types of intellect tend to mutual exclusiveness, that a mind like Hegel's is essentially differentiated from a mind like Milton's or Goethe's, and works by different methods; that the artistic faculty of a great painter has simply no affinity with that of a great musician; that the qualities which make an eminent mathematician are almost incompatible with those of a poet. A man may indeed possess such strength of intellect that he can distinguish himself in many departments of thought; but versatility of this sort usually implies immense talent rather than the genius which reigns supreme in any one sphere. Where the latter exists it is ordinarily accompanied by less than common aptitude in other directions, as if this exceptional superiority were only attainable through the absorption into itself of the entire mental energy. And still further, transcendent power in one line of thought is not only an endowment, but an acquirement; it is a gift which comes to full realisation only under favourable conditions and through careful discipline. Whether it be in art or science, or metaphysics, mastery is not possible except to him who is so placed that he can serve himself heir to the past, and who subjects himself to the needful tuition and training.

The idea that Christ as the Incarnate Son possessed every mental quality and acquisition may be dismissed as baseless if we allow the portrait given in the Gospels to bear its own witness. The course of the world's history, apart from that of His own race, seems to have been known to Him in no other way and in no greater degree than to others of his fellow-countrymen. There is no indication of any acquaintance with the details of the story of Greece or Rome. The non-Jewish peoples are all massed together in the commonly accepted designation of Gentiles. He looked at life only in the light of religion, and applied to it but one test, Was it lived with God or without Him? "All these things do the nations of the world seek after"; but "seek ye first the kingdom of God." Greek philosophy and Roman law had apparently no place in His thought. If we are told that He knew these, but had no occasion to refer to them, we naturally ask what ground there is for the supposition. And no reply can be given but the old arbitrary hypothesis that the Son of God *must* have known them.

When, however, we confine the question to the history of Israel, we are in a different sphere. For it lay in the line of His unique redemptive mission, and He was continually recurring to it. His relation to the Old Testament is a combination of profound reverence and extraordinary

freedom of handling. He both exalts the Law and supersedes it; points out its defects, yet declares its perpetuity. Formally, His words regarding it sometimes present a contradiction; but they are perfectly self-consistent, when we realise the spiritual standpoint from which He treated it. The Law contained for Him a true revelation from God, but in forms adapted to the earlier and imperfect stages of man's life; and His function was to disengage the abiding truth in it from its temporary expression. Hence He criticised it, not in order to abolish, but to establish it. And the problem which is forced upon us is, Have we any reason to suppose that Christ meant to guarantee the historicity of the Old Testament incidents to which He alludes for purposes of instruction and exhortation, and that in questions of biblical criticism we can quote Him as the ultimate arbiter? When He says, "Moses wrote of Me," or "Have ye not read in the book of Moses?"[1] is He covering with divine sanction the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, which was accepted by those to whom He spoke?

There are those who contend that Christ's knowledge of everything concerning the Hebrew Scriptures must have been all-comprehensive, "because He was contemporary with their writers and with the events which they contain."[2] "As

[1] John v. 46; Mark xii. 26. [2] Hall, *Kenotic Theory*, p. 192.

the Second Person of the All-Holy Trinity He was the giver" of the Old Testament revelation.[1] So also Canon Mason declares, "All that pertained to the Holy Scriptures belonged to the personal history of the Divine Son, and seems to have come back to Him as such."[2] If this argument has any force, it manifestly applies as much to universal existence as to the history of Israel, for through the Son the worlds were created, and "without Him was not anything made that was made." But was there ever a clearer case of ambiguous middle? What is true of the Son in His timeless existence is here calmly transferred to Him in the period of His humiliation, as if the continuity of His absolute attributes were self-evident. Not the faintest perception is shown that in Christ we are concerned with a divine manifestation under the conditions of time and space, for our knowledge of which we are indebted to historical evidence. We start from the historical indeed, and then the whole question is treated as if it lay in an ideal sphere, where logical self-consistency was the one necessity.

Again, it has been ingeniously argued that,

[1] Powell, *op. cit.* p. 442. Mr. Powell finds (pp. 401–402) in Christ's references to the days of Lot a proof of His divine omniscience lying at the back of His human knowledge, inasmuch as He adds some particulars not given in Genesis, and speaks of events directly as things which He had Himself seen. The whole passage is well worth reading as an illustration of Mr. Powell's method of reasoning.

[2] *The Conditions of our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 189.

just because Christ sat in judgment on the Old Testament, and declared authoritatively the abrogation of some of its injunctions, all His allusions to it in an affirmative way carry equally the weight of His authority; that His word is as final in attesting the fact that Elijah called down fire from heaven as in rebuking the revengeful spirit shown by such an act; and that, therefore, every reference which He makes to an Old Testament incident is a guarantee of its occurrence. Let us test this by a simple case. He speaks of the drought in the days of Elijah as lasting three years and six months. The same statement is made in the Epistle of St. James.[1] But in the First Book of Kings we are told that the rain came "in the third year,"[2] which would make the drought about two years and a half, possibly less. How are we to explain the discrepancy? "Jesus like his brother James," says Dr. Plummer, "follows Jewish tradition as to the duration of the famine. . . . Ever since the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, three years and a half (=42 months= 1260 days) had become the traditional duration of times of great calamity."[3] Would anyone affirm that our Lord is endorsing the current Jewish view as the correct account, and that He means to repudiate an inaccuracy in First Kings?

[1] Luke iv. 25; Jas. v. 17.
[2] 1 Kings xviii. 1.
[3] *Internat. Comm. on Luke*, p. 128.

Is it not obvious that He simply treats the matter as part of an accepted story, which has an ominous significance for the Nazarenes who rejected Him?

So likewise, in His declaration that Abraham or Moses pointed forward to Him, the emphasis is not on the historicity of the patriarch or law-giver, but on the spiritual meaning which He read in the words or events traditionally connected with them; not on the details as to when or by whom the Old Testament writings were composed, but on their religious value. On the historical problem He does not speak with authority one way or the other. He neither asserts nor denies: He utilises the material given Him as a means of setting forth the principles of the final revelation of God. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad."[1] These words are not a contribution to a scientific biography of Abraham; they lay bare the immanent truth of the Old Testament record, its function as a preparation for the "fulness of time."

It is utterly futile in deprecation of such a view to quote Christ's saying to Nicodemus, "If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?"[2] and to argue that if His word is not to be implicitly taken in the region of earthly know-

[1] John viii. 56. [2] John iii. 12.

ledge, it cannot be trusted in that of spiritual. One might as well contend that if we do not accept the first chapter of Genesis as an accurate scientific statement, we have no right to find in it any message from God at all. The Bible in speaking of the creation of the world proclaims the sublimest religious truths, but in doing so necessarily touches on what belongs to the domain of science. That it does not deal with the latter in what is called a scientific way does not lessen by an iota the supreme spiritual value of its teaching. In like manner, Christ could not possibly unfold the true meaning of that Old Testament of whose utterances He was Himself the fulfilment, without making historical references. But He did not make these from the critical standpoint. They were not primary for His thought, but incidental; and are no more authoritative in the sphere of historical criticism than the Bible story of creation in the sphere of physical research.

The more one examines these allusions of our Lord to the sacred record, the clearer it becomes that He takes the incidents as they stand, and as they were regarded by the men of His time, and turns them to spiritual uses. For example, the question which He addressed to the Jews as to the Messiah, "Whose son is he?"[1] rests on the assumption, now practically surrendered, of

[1] Matt. xxii. 42.

the Davidic authorship of the 110th Psalm. Christ takes the current opinion of the authorship, and on that basis, which His opponents acknowledged, He seeks to convince them of their inadequate conception of the Messiah. Our Lord Himself probably shared that opinion, just as He probably shared the prevalent belief that the words which He read in the synagogue at Nazareth were written by Isaiah of Jerusalem. Neither the one point nor the other was of importance for His purpose. It is, indeed, possible to hold, though there are no facts to support the view, that He knew that the Psalm was non-Davidic, but accommodated Himself to the thought of His hearers, so that speaking from their presuppositions He might instruct them on a vital question. But the one course which is wholly illegitimate is to say with the late Bishop Stubbs, "I am not affected by doubts thrown on the authorship of the 110th Psalm, except so far as to use His" (Christ's) "authority to set these doubts aside."[1] No position more dangerous to faith could be taken up. If Christ is declared by us to guarantee the accuracy of what is scientifically disproved, or at least improbable in the last degree, we are much more likely to imperil His claim than to establish the disputed point. And no man is entitled to misrepresent on arbitrary grounds the character

[1] *Visitation Charges*, p. 151.

of His authority. Repudiation, in a dogmatic interest, of the results of investigation is foredoomed to failure. When, on the other hand, an attempt is made to reconcile these results with the retention of the traditional opinion, the desperate nature of the situation becomes almost ludicrous. One writer[1] reminds us that our Lord does not definitely assign the whole Psalm to David, but only the words which He quotes from it, and that His statement does not exclude a recasting of the Psalm, provided the recasting retained the words of David. To such extravagances are men led when they work from an abstract theory. It has been too much the practice of theologians to fight inch by inch in defence of a traditional view, and when driven from one outpost to fall back upon another, instead of recognising that the *method* they had inherited was discredited, and that a totally different attitude must be assumed. The struggle between faith and physical science has been one long illustration of this, and it seems as if the same folly were to be repeated in the Church's relation to biblical criticism. A great step in advance will be registered when it is plainly acknowledged that it is an abuse of the authority of Christ to invoke it for the arrest of critical inquiry into Scripture, or for the settlement of critical problems, and

[1] Powell, *Principle of the Incarnation*, p. 458.

that consequently His employment of a phrase like "the sign of the prophet Jonah"[1] gives not the slightest help in determining whether the book of Jonah is history or parable.

III.

There can be no doubt that Christ displays at times a knowledge of facts and events which at first sight does not seem to have been ascertained through ordinary human channels. But this is a characteristic which always marks prophetic vision. In all ages some souls have possessed what to others appeared a faculty nothing short of marvellous of diagnosing men's characters, of discovering what they truly are from slight indications, and even of forecasting accurately the course they would pursue. A single act or trait bears for them a profound significance, and reveals to them the deep underlying trend of motive and impulse more clearly than long experience would disclose to their neighbours, who are astonished when the predictive utterance, which at the moment seemed so unlikely, comes true. A hundred passages in the Gospels prove that our Lord had this interpretative insight in an unequalled degree. That it should have been so has verisimilitude on the face of it. It could not

[1] Matt. xii. 39.

but be that One so crystalline in His purity, and so keenly observant of human ways, should have attained a sureness of moral judgment which to us with our blurred perceptions suggests the purely miraculous. We have to remember that partial parallels, or at least approximations, to the manifestations of His prophetic quality in this interpretative sense are recorded both in the Old and in the New Testament. Elisha's knowledge of Gehazi's transaction with Naaman, and Peter's of Ananias' falsehood,[1] surprise us in the same way as Jesus' knowledge of Nathanael's prayer under the fig-tree, or of Peter's fall, or of Judas' betrayal, or of His own sufferings and death, or of the destruction of Jerusalem. In the case of prophets and apostles, as well as in that of our Lord, there are instances related of a circumstantial acquaintance with events distant or future, which, so far as we can see, could not have been gained by inference from known facts;[2] and it is little use attempting to form a theory. It may have pleased God to reveal to Jesus that there was a stater in the fish's mouth, or that the disciples would find in the village a colt tied and a man bearing a pitcher

[1] 2 Kings v. 26; Acts v. 3.

[2] Cf. Mason, *op. cit.* p. 163, "There is no indication that I am aware of, that our Lord's supernatural knowledge in things of this nature differed *in kind* from that of the prophets."

of water who would take them to the upper chamber,[1] as it may have pleased Him to reveal to Paul that no loss of life would accrue from the shipwreck;[2] but the former knowledge in itself is no more a proof of Deity than the latter. Nor can we infer that, because Jesus knew these things, He must have known all other matters equally beyond ordinary human ken. Such a conclusion becomes plainly irrational, when every page of the Evangelists shows our Lord as learning by observation or information from others. Great ingenuity has been expended in attempting to prove that the questions asked by Christ never implied ignorance on His part; that they were put for every conceivable reason except to gain information; that when in the press of the crowd He exclaimed, "Who touched Me?" or said to the father of the demoniac, "How long is it since this hath come unto him?" or inquired where Lazarus was laid, He spoke thus not to learn anything, but to encourage others, or to veil His own feeling at the moment. All His exclamations as of sudden admiration or anger, all His indications of surprise, even His cry of desertion on the Cross, are but the appearances of emotion, and did not spring from the depths of His being. This entire line of argument may be put out of court.

[1] Matt. xvii. 27; Mark xi. 2–6. [2] Acts xxvii. 22, 34.

It represents an exploded method of interpretation. If it *could* succeed, it would take all reality out of the Incarnation, and is indeed but a resuscitation of the ancient Doketic heresy.

No rendering will do justice to the Gospels which does not recognise plainly that ordinarily Christ's knowledge of men and events came to Him through the usual media, and that even His most penetrative judgments were due to His spiritual insight *working on the facts before Him.* That was the normal character of His incarnate state. Special illumination may have been vouchsafed to Him on occasion regarding matters which, while merely incidental or external, were yet in some way related to His mission; but, in any case, it was exceptional. It is quite misleading to say, as Dr. Mason does, who yet argues for the limitation of Christ's knowledge in some particulars, that the things which He appears not to have known were "trivial facts, easily to be ascertained by an ordinary question, or by walking a few steps," while the things which He knew were "God and man, Himself and His saving work, the Bible and the Divine dispensations."[1] The latter assertion regarding the real sphere of our Lord's knowledge is in the deepest sense true; but what Dr. Mason means by it is evident when we find that he actually interprets St. Paul's

[1] *The Conditions of our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 190.

phrase, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," as indicating that from the Cross Christ commanded the whole field of human history, and came into conscious contact with every one of us, "that each individual 'brother' of His, however distant in time and clime, not only has a place in His thought and affection now, but had a place in His thought and affection then."[1] There is not the slightest foundation for such an idea. If our Lord did thus forecast the future, and saw all the details of human circumstance in unborn generations, it becomes infinitely incredible that He can ever have been ignorant, as Canon Mason supposes, of small points as to the person who "touched" Him, or as to the barrenness of the fig tree. The matters to which Christ's knowledge did not extend are not rightly described as "trivial." They covered, so far as we can judge, whole ranges of human thought and interest—matters of secular history, natural science, philosophy, art. But the fullest disclosure on these things, as human experience testifies, would not have added an iota to the intrinsic value of the revelation which He made concerning the character of God, and the redemption and the duty of man. They are "trivial" only in the sense that they belong to another and lower sphere altogether. His vocation was of a different order: to declare and verify

[1] *Ibid.* pp. 168–169.

the nature and destiny of the soul, and to manifest under the conditions of the age in which He lived that which is true of all ages of humanity.

We are confusing things that differ when we imagine that His unbroken communion with the Father of itself carried with it plenary intellectual vision. It revealed to Him the *universal*, the purpose that underlies human history, the final cause of man's life and the conditions of realising it. And it revealed to Him also the universal *in* the particular, in the actual character or event with which He was confronted. But it did not supply the place of personal experience in acquainting Him with the particular as such, with the incidents or achievements of other times or localities.[1] His sinlessness no more involved a knowledge of Jacob's relations with Laban than of the date of the Founding of Rome. It did not disclose facts of history, but it enabled Him to interpret in their inner significance facts otherwise disclosed to Him. When the Fourth Gospel says that "He knew all men,"[2] there is no reference to divine omniscience. The context shows that quite clearly. Jesus did not trust Himself to those who at the Passover "believed on His name," because He saw that their belief was based only or chiefly on His miracles, and lacked the self-committal of spiritual faith. He

[1] See Dale, *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 288–289.
[2] John ii. 24–25.

perceived their true nature, the motives that swayed them, and did not need the testimony of others to guide Him. It is not in the least meant that every detail of their past life lay open before Him, but simply that He read with unerring accuracy the character of every individual with whom He came in contact. "He knew what was in man."

Nor did sinlessness mean that His mind ceased to be a distinctive type of humanity. The perfect balance of His nature, responsive in its every part to the divine, signified indeed that all His powers, mental as well as moral, operated in their fullest expansion. But He retained a definite individuality of His own, easily distinguishable in its intellectual cast from many other types. He thought as well as spoke in the language of the people, direct, picturesque, unspeculative. To suppose that He could have employed, if He had chosen, St. Paul's method of utterance, or Plato's, or Aristotle's, is a judgment worthy only of those who believe that Bacon wrote *Hamlet*. It implies total blindness to the personal characteristic which the Gospels so powerfully portray, and which is so self-verifying. He had as little to do with critical theories of the Old Testament as with Darwin's *Origin of Species*. His thought never moved in that domain, not merely because His type of mind did not lie to it, but because the problems there

raised did not exist for His age. The greatest poetry may appear early in the history of mankind; but great scientific achievements come late, and only after a long process of development. For they are based on an immense collection of facts, slowly accumulated through many generations. Newton's discovery of the Law of Gravitation was rendered possible only by the conditions under which he wrought, by the observational and theoretical results already reached by his predecessors, and by the scientific instruments which they had gradually elaborated and made ready to his hand. The same principle applies to every department of science, whether physical or historical. To attribute, therefore, to Christ, placed as He was among a people to whom the scientific treatment of history was unknown, an authority in discussions on the authorship and dates of Old Testament books, is a sheer anachronism. Of course the requisite knowledge *might* have been conveyed to Him miraculously by the Father. But we have no right to say that God must have wrought this miracle, because He wrought the miracle of Christ's sinlessness. There is no similarity or parallelism between the two cases. In the one, the miracle consists in endowing a personality with a spiritual perfection necessary for the fulfilment of his specific function; in the other, in endowing him with ideas and aptitudes bearing no relation to his mission.

and in no way correlated to the character or needs of his environment. The latter type of miracle has to be proved, not assumed; and the proof will not be found in the Gospels.

IV.

That Christ's thought had its limitations is involved in the reality of *His moral growth.* When we speak of His temptation, what do we mean? We know what temptation means for ourselves. To an almost inconceivable degree it is connected with our human ignorance. The force with which it assails us comes largely from its unexpectedness. We go out in the morning possessed with the most generous and kindly feelings; we remain in this temper for hours; but suddenly we stumble across someone who grievously disappoints us or treats us with rudeness, and we flash out into needless anger. Probably a short time after we are ashamed of ourselves; we are astonished at our own folly. How was it that we were betrayed into this excess? Very much because we were taken unawares. Our thoughts were flowing smoothly in another channel; and then in a moment something struck in to disturb and arrest the current. It was not simply the unpleasantness of it that irritated us, but the surprise of it, the swift contrast it presented to our mood at the time. We

could not quickly enough adjust ourselves to the new situation. When we had leisure to do so later, our better nature reasserted itself. True, even had we been capable of forecasting the time and form of our temptation, it would not necessarily have lost its power over us, which proves that the root of the evil lies not in the unexpectedness of it, but in the inward disposition with which it is met; not in the event itself, but in our attitude to it. The knowledge that some painful ordeal is before us, instead of enabling us to bear ourselves well under it, may embitter our spirit so that we come to it charged with indignation. But the nobler we are, the less will that happen, and the more will the clear anticipation of the trial call up high motives of generosity and self-restraint. To a man finely attempered it is the suddenness of the attack which makes it formidable; for it takes him at a disadvantage.

This unforeseen factor pervades and colours all our life; and it is the subtlest element in temptation for the best souls. Did Christ know nothing of it? If He had an absolute prevision of every event that was to befall Him, of every word that was to be spoken to Him, how can it be said that "He was tempted in all points like as we are"? Temptation, indeed, comes in different shapes to men according to their nature and circumstances. But this is not a question of the particular forms which it assumes, but of a

condition which in our case is ever recurrent, and which is an essential part of our moral discipline. We come up to new and unanticipated experiences through which our character is enriched and fortified. Surely it cannot have been otherwise with Christ if "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." His perfection, as we have seen, was not the absolute holiness of God, but the sinlessness of One who lived a conditioned life, the faultless fulfilment of His vocation. However clear to Him His mission was from the beginning of His ministry, that does not imply that the Father unfolded before Him at the outset every stage and detail of His course, so that He foresaw, say from the hour of His Baptism, the visit of Nicodemus by night or the question of the Young Ruler. Incidents of that kind were no more disclosed to Him than they are to us. With Him as with us they took unexpected turns. The indignant emphasis with which He rebuked Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan,"[1] naturally suggests the horror of aversion *suddenly* awaked in Him by the Apostle's repudiation of a suffering Messiah. If He never seems taken by surprise, that is not because He foreknew the event, but because He was so utterly one in will and purpose with the Father, that it meant for Him only what the Father intended. The secret of

[1] Mark viii. 33.

overcoming any temptation which life brings is not a special preparation of soul in view of a definite forecast of the ordeal, but the continual maintenance of that right relation to God which instinctively shows us at the time the path to walk in. Christ alone among men constantly stood in that right relation to the Father, and therefore no trial, however unforeseen, had power to draw Him aside. He triumphed not by His foreknowledge, but by His trust. According to His counsel to the disciples, He was not anxious beforehand how or what He should speak: *it was given Him in that same hour.*[1] In this respect He was made like unto His brethren.

And just as His thought was not the omniscience proper to Deity, so His miracles were not the outcome of the omnipotence proper to Deity. Neither His words nor His acts were those of the Eternal Son in His absolute being, but of the Son speaking and acting under human conditions as Son of Man. No one can fail to see that He regarded His life as one long obedience. He was there by the will of Another, and only carried out a mission entrusted. "As I hear, I judge." And Obedience has for its correlative Dependence. He received before He gave, and derived not only the command, but the power to fulfil it, from the Father. "The words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself; but the Father

[1] Matt. x. 19.

abiding in Me doeth His works."[1] His prayers, which St. Luke mentions so frequently, were but the utterance of that spirit of receptivity in which He lived and breathed, and which conditioned His miracles as well as every other manifestation of Himself. He wrought them in virtue of a delegated authority. This is clear not merely from the whole character of His ministry, but from occasional specific statements. At the grave of Lazarus, when the stone had been rolled away, He exclaimed, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest Me; and I knew *that Thou hearest Me always*; but because of the multitude which standeth around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me."[2] Again, when confronted in the Garden with the officers who were sent to take Him, He checked Peter's impetuosity, saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?"[3] He traces up all to God, and never acts as if He were the possessor of an independent divine authority. That in the case of many of His miracles there is no reference to a preceding prayer, is no more a proof that He wrought them apart from the Father's gift of power than a similar absence in the case of His profoundest utterances is a proof that He spoke them apart from the Father's gift of wisdom.

[1] John xiv. 10. [2] John xi. 41, 42. [3] Matt. xxvi. 53.

Sometimes a false inference is drawn from the contrast between the record of our Lord's miracles and that of His Apostles'. Peter effected the cure of the lame man at the gate of the Temple "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," and to the paralytic Æneas he said, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."[1] That none of the Apostles ever claimed to work a miracle except in the power conferred by the risen Lord is quite certain, though in some instances, as in those of Dorcas and the cripple of Lystra, no explicit mention of Christ is made.[2] On the other hand Christ Himself uses the direct formula, "I will; be thou clean"; "I say unto thee, Arise."[3] He speaks in His own person, as they do not. Yet it would be wholly erroneous to argue from this fact that He wrought His miracles in His own power as the Eternal Son, while they wrought theirs in a power bestowed by Another; that the gift was in Him inherent and absolute, while theirs was conferred from above. In both cases it was conferred; the difference lay in His unique capacity of receiving it. The emphasis which he puts on His own personality is an assertion, not of His independence of the Father, but of the entireness of His dependence upon Him, of the perfect response which He is conscious that He alone offers to the Father's will, and by virtue

[1] Acts iii. 6; ix. 34. [2] Acts ix. 40; xiv. 10.
[3] Matt. viii. 3; Mark v. 41.

of which He holds a unique supremacy over men.[1]

To speak thus of His "unique capacity of receiving" from the Father as His fundamental characteristic may seem to some, at first sight, to rob Him of His glory as the Incarnate Son. On the contrary it is the only way in which we can hope to understand the real nature of His glory. He verifies Himself as Son of God by the completeness with which he embodies the divine in humanity. Dr. Moberly is quite right in saying that the prerogative of power which He exercised "belongs to the unexplored truth of human nature, whose relation is perfected with God,"[2] if by this expression is meant that Christ's miracles are to be attributed to a divine energy not operating

[1] The Bishop of Ossory (Dr. J. T. O'Brien), in his *Charge, 1863*, says: "It is not surprising that it should be generally thought that the miraculous power which was displayed by the Redeemer was possessed and exercised by Him as an essential property of the Divine element in His constitution. This, indeed, would be the conclusion to which, probably, everyone would come who ventured to speculate on this great mystery apart from Scripture. But Scripture gives a very different view of the nature and effects of the Incarnation. It seems distinctly to teach us that when the everlasting Son condescended to take our nature upon Him, He came, not outwardly only, but in truth, into a new relation to the Father, in which He was really His *messenger* and His *servant*, dependent upon the Father for everything, and deriving from Him directly everything that He needed for His work." After quoting several passages to this effect, the Bishop adds: "They testify directly to the fact that the state of the Son in the flesh was one of absolute and entire dependence upon the Father, both for Divine knowledge and Divine power." Pp. 105–106.

[2] *Atonement and Personality*, p. 102.

apart from or superseding His human activities, but working through them, and are therefore a disclosure of the latent capabilities of humanity when it attains its perfect fulfilment by the interpenetration and indwelling of the divine. That is no doubt an accurate description of the conditions of Christ's miraculous authority. But it would convey an erroneous impression, unless we remember that the exaltation of the human to its ideal height through the indwelling divine has been only once exemplified in history, that it begins and ends with Christ Himself. Hence, while the prerogative of power which He possessed reveals "the unexplored truth of human nature, whose relation is perfected with God," and thus belongs to humanity in its truly normal or ideal state, yet the fact that His human nature alone was normal *in an otherwise abnormal race* argues in Him a special interposition of God, and the presence of the divine in a supreme and transcendent sense.

V.

In such a discussion of Christ's personality as it actually presented itself to men, we cannot but feel that we are in a very different atmosphere from that of the apostolic writings. The Epistles of the New Testament throb with the consciousness of His eternal life as dominant over time and space. He is the King of Glory, the abiding

Head of His Church, its inspiration and strength. To the Apostles He is first and last the reigning Lord, who dwells in them by His Spirit, and it is from within this consciousness that they recall His earthly period. Their one thought is: He who *is* so great once abased Himself for our sakes; being rich, He became poor; being on an equality with God, He emptied Himself and became obedient to death. What this humiliation meant for Him, what He surrendered by undergoing it, they never attempt to estimate. That it signified an unspeakable cost, which was the expression of the divine love, is the presupposition of all their appeals. They rest in the fact of Incarnation; they do not seek to define or explicate it in the region of *Christ's personal experience*. But it is just the endeavour to define this which is at the back of the Christological controversies. It is easy to disparage them as logomachies, but they were the outcome of an inevitable movement, the necessity of stating Christian faith in terms of thought, of finding intellectual correlates for an assured spiritual conviction. The Church could not content itself with merely repeating New Testament phrases, when the whole question in dispute was as to what they involved. In self-vindication, it had to give its own interpretation of them in its own language. When challenged as to Christ's person, it had to declare what it meant by calling Him

both God and Man. The answer which it gave at Chalcedon was right in a declaratory sense, that the very Son of God became true man; but it was false if taken, as it has been taken, in an explanatory sense, as defining the actual character of the union of divine and human in Christ. In treating of a historical fact, it gave the ideal interpretation, not the historical one. The Chalcedonian Creed, says Professor Orr, "puts the predicates alongside of each other, but does nothing to show their compatibility and mutual relationship. . . . Perhaps it was better that it should do so, should stop with the warding off of errors, and should leave the attempts at positive construction to theology."[1] The imperative need of theology at the present time is some positive construction along historic lines.[2]

There is little doubt, as has been often pointed out, that the old Christology made the problem of Christ's person more difficult for itself by its exaggerated conception of the antithesis between humanity and divinity, as absolute opposites; and that the deeper truth is rather the affinity of the two, the idea of man as *capax infiniti*, essentially akin to God, rooted in Him, and only realising the

[1] *The Progress of Dogma*, p. 193.

[2] See the fourth of a valuable series of articles on the "Person of our Lord" by Principal Dykes in the *Expository Times* for January 1906, where the same acknowledgment is made of the need of re-stating "the old problem left at Chalcedon." The article had not appeared when this chapter was written.

true and complete ideal of his humanity in proportion as he receives and appropriates the divine.[1] But even if we give the fullest meaning to this thought of the kinship between God and man, it would not solve the antinomy created by the Chalcedonian statement of the two natures in Christ. For however truly akin God's nature and man's may be in their spiritual quality, they remain none the less separate in their intellectual or metaphysical properties, in their type of consciousness. God in His absolute being cannot be conceived otherwise than as transcending time and space, as infinite in wisdom and in power. His knowledge is complete, all-inclusive, intuitive. Human thought moves from point to point, by acquisition and inference; and can only hold within consciousness at any single moment part of what it does know. No matter how real may be the affinity of divine and human nature, these two diverse methods or forms of operation can by no possibility coexist *within the same conscious personality*; nor do the Gospels give any hint that they coexisted in Christ, or leave any dubiety as to which of them ruled in His case. However definitely they may convince us that He was none other than the Word, they make it abundantly clear that He was the Word *made flesh*, living, thinking, acting under distinctively human conditions. When, then, we speak of two minds

[1] Orr, *op. cit.* p. 176.

or two wills as united in His person, we are not reading from the facts; we are arbitrarily creating for ourselves a difficulty which they do not present. The person was divine, but self-restrained within the limits of humanity; His thoughts *typically* those of a human mind, His resolves those of a human will. The Incarnate retained indeed His consciousness of Deity, knew Himself to be the Eternal Son, but never broke through the restrictions of the human nature which He had voluntarily assumed.[1]

"The formula of two natures in one person," says Dr. Denney, "does not adequately reproduce the impression which He makes. He is all one—that is the very strongest conviction we have: the simplicity, the unity, the consistency of His life is the final impression it leaves. The divine and the human are not distinct . . . all that is divine in Him is human, all that is human is divine."[2] One cannot fail to be struck by the persistent though ever-defeated attempts, from the fourth to the seventh century, to do justice in some sort to this unity. But the theories propounded with this view by Apollinaris and Eutyches were extremely imperfect and provisional. If, as Apollinaris held, the Logos took the place of, or rather became, the human soul in Christ in such wise as to preserve Him from

[1] Cf. Bensow, *Die Lehre von der Kenose*, p. 269.
[2] *Studies in Theology*, p. 69.

all human mutability;[1] or if, as Eutyches taught, there was a fusion of the two natures or an absorption of the human nature in the divine, then in either case Christ's true and complete humanity was impaired, and the explicit affirmation of it by the Church was indispensable. But the assertion of it at Chalcedon was made in such a way as did nothing to meet the just demand which underlay all the diverse and perplexing forms of Monophysitism. For manifestly, if we speak of two natures in one person, so far as we attach any intelligible meaning to the expression, it is the duality of the nature, not the unity of the person, which is uppermost in our thought; just the reverse, in short, of the deepest impression which Christ's life makes upon us. Consequently the Monophysite tendency persisted in spite of the Church's official pronouncement. Yet it was perpetually doomed to defeat, because it attempted to secure the unity from the divine standpoint, and therefore never reached a real Incarnation. But as it was not the human which took the divine type of life, but the divine which took the human type, it is through the

[1] The theory of Apollinaris, however inadmissible as a whole, contained elements of truth which he himself did not adequately realise. "The πνεῦμα in Christ was human πνεῦμα, although divine"; or, as Dorner paraphrases his thought, "the Logos far from being foreign to, rather constitutes the perfection of, the humanity." But Apollinaris did not develop the idea in any genuine way. See Dorner, *Person of Christ*, Div. I. vol. ii. pp. 371 ff. Cf. Orr, *The Progress of Dogma*, pp. 180–181.

humanity that any construction of Christ's personality as a unity must proceed. "The Incarnate," as Dr. Moberly says, "never leaves His Incarnation. God, as man, is always in all things God *as man.* He no more ceases at any point to be God under methods and conditions essentially human, than, under these essentially human methods and conditions, He at any point ceases to be God. Whatever the reverence of their motive may be, men do harm to consistency and to truth, by keeping open as it were, a sort of non-human sphere or aspect of the Incarnation. This opening we should unreservedly desire to close. There are not two existences either of, or within, the Incarnate, side by side with one another. If it is all Divine, it is all human too. We are to study the Divine in and through the human. By looking for the Divine side by side with the human, instead of discerning the Divine within the human, we miss the significance of them both."[1] The revelation, in other words, is a revelation *in* humanity; not partly in it and partly out of it.

But if it be so, we must not shrink from giving the fact its full meaning. We must not ascribe to Christ a humanity which is in no respect identical with ours in essential characteristics. Yet we do this in effect when we conceive of Him as moving through life with a perfect vision of all things past and future, conscious of possess-

[1] *Atonement and Personality*, p. 97.

ing the reserves of omnipotence.[1] It is no such unreal Incarnation that the records portray, but one in which the Son of God becomes man, takes a definite place in the order of human history, with all that that implies, and from within His appointed sphere works out our salvation. As His personality was in its external activities bounded by one land and one people, so in its intellectual movement it bore the marks of His age and race. But though, if it were to be human at all, His life had to assume this particular form, it perfectly realised the ideal set before it, and disclosed to men the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, and disclosed it not by what He was apart from His manhood, but by what He was in it.

This self-limitation of the divine to the con-

[1] "The Divine Word seems to be clearly exhibited to us there" (*i.e.* in the Holy Scriptures) "as greatly changed in His union with frail humanity. Not only was all His heavenly glory laid by, when He tabernacled in the flesh, but all His infinite attributes and powers seem, for the same time, to have been in abeyance, so to speak. And by this something more is meant than that the manifestation and exercise of them were suspended. That is undoubtedly true, but it seems to fall far short of the whole truth. It appears that there was not merely a voluntary suspension of the exercise of them, but a voluntary renunciation of the capacity of exercising them, for the time. This involves no change of His essence or nature; and no destruction of His Divine powers, as if they had ceased to exist, or loss of them, so that they could not be resumed." Bishop O'Brien, *Charge, 1863*, p. 105. The Bishop makes a strong and just protest against the *a priori* method of treating this question by inferences drawn from abstract conceptions of divinity and humanity, and rightly insists that it is the Gospels alone that supply the materials for an answer.

ditions of a genuine humanity is scouted by Sabatier as an inherent absurdity. "The traditional Christology," he says, "has been so incurably Doketic that it has been practically impossible, from this point of view, to write a serious Life of Jesus without falling into the heresy at once modern and semi-pagan of *Kenosis*, the theory according to which the pre-existent and eternal Deity commits suicide by incarnating Himself, in order gradually to be re-born and find Himself God again at the end of His human life."[1] Sabatier might have been a little more exact in his phraseology, seeing that the Christian Church does not affirm the incarnation of God in His absolute being, but only of the eternal Son of God. And why, we may well ask, should it be a disparagement of any Christian doctrine, whether incarnation or atonement, that it has analogies after a sort in pagan religions? The primary question is whether the facts bear it out. If they do not, there is no more to be said. If they do, then the existence of somewhat gross anticipations or adumbrations of it in lower stages of thought rather confirms than discredits it, because they show its relation to some fundamental necessity in man. But Sabatier's attitude to the Kenotic view is easily explained. His purpose is *to repudiate the Incarnation altogether* as a ridiculous impossibility; and so he naturally

[1] *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 142.

pours scorn on the only construction of it, as he admits, which renders a "serious" Life of Jesus as the Incarnate Son possible. But it is another matter when orthodox writers adopt his sneer, without seeing that they are playing into his hands by reverting to a standpoint which makes the Incarnation "incurably Doketic." Do they believe that the Son of God was actually born as an unconscious child into our race, and grew slowly according to human conditions into the possession of His powers, and yet that when He had reached human maturity—or perhaps at the time of His baptism—He reassumed the plenitude of the divine? If it is credible that He voluntarily underwent the limits proper to infancy, it cannot surely be *in*credible that He underwent the less restricted limits proper to manhood. It is hardly worth while to start with a real Incarnation only to end in a Doketic one. Or is it to be Doketic from first to last?

It is quite futile to seek to disparage the idea of the Son's self-limitation by asking what became of His cosmical function during the incarnate period. It may be, as Godet[1] maintains, that that function was then discharged by the Father; or, as Martensen[2] holds, that the Son continued

[1] *Commentary on St. John*, vol. i. p. 403, note; see his whole discussion, which is admirable, of the problem of the consciousness of the Incarnate Son, *ibid.* pp. 394 ff.

[2] *Dogmatics*, pp. 264–267; cf. also Gore, *Dissertations*, pp. 207, 215 ff.

to exercise it, so that His life was lived from two centres. But this is a matter with which we have nothing to do as interpreters of the historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Our sole duty is to form as fair and accurate an idea as we can of the incarnate life from the accounts contained in the Gospels. That is what the Kenotic theory claims to do. It is no objection to it that it does not answer all the questions that speculatively arise out of it. It may or may not be true, as Martensen and Dr. Gore think, that the Son during His humiliation lived *from two non-communicating centres*. That is a point on which the New Testament has nothing to say; but it makes it abundantly clear that He did not live this dual life *from one conscious centre* as the Incarnate Son.[1]

The frank recognition that such was the character of the Son's incarnate state is a prime necessity for Christian faith at the present time. For this age is pre-eminently one of historical research, bent on discovering as far as possible the actual facts of the past. Now it has been demonstrated beyond dispute that there are sayings of our Lord which, taken literally, seem to conflict with established results of biblical investigation, and that His teaching in many of its parts is coloured by temporary Jewish influences. When Professor Pfleiderer, on grounds such as

[1] See Note appended to this chapter, on Philippians ii. 6.

these, ridicules the notion that Christ is a "final definitive authority,"[1] the only right reply is: We do not claim that Christ's word is final in all spheres, but we do claim that He has embodied in His person and in the principles He has expounded the final revelation of religious truth and practice, of "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duties God requires of man." Hooker's warning concerning our attitude to the biblical revelation applies equally to our attitude to Him who is the central glory of it. "Whatsoever is spoken of God or things appertaining to God otherwise than as the truth is, though it seem an honour it is an injury; and as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation, so we must likewise take great heed, *lest in attributing unto Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed.*"[2] We can only gain for Christ His true place and essential significance by plainly recognising, not only that the limitations are there, but that they are the inseparable accompaniments of a historical Incarnation.

[1] Pfleiderer, *Evolution and Theology*, pp. 20, 24.
[2] *Eccles. Pol.*, Bk. ii. chap. viii. 7.

NOTE

ON THE EXPRESSION ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν (PHIL. II. 6).

See *Ante*, p. 96.

IT is perhaps unfortunate that the word Kenotic, taken from this phrase of St. Paul, should have become the accepted technical description of all the theories that seek to do justice to the truth that the Incarnation of the Son involved a *real* self-limitation of His divine mode of existence. For it is apt to convey the impression that the truth in this matter rests on a particular exegesis of this single passage in Philippians (ii. 5–11). Nothing can be further from the fact. The Pauline expressions as to the self-emptying or self-impoverishment (2 Cor. viii. 9) of the Son only emphasise what the narratives of Christ's life suggest, and their elimination would leave the problem as presented in the Gospels precisely where it was.[1]

Whatever interpretations may be adopted of detailed phrases in Philippians ii. 5–11, the Apostle certainly does not mean that the Son in becoming man ceased to be divine. But in order to become man He made an unspeakable surrender of some divine prerogatives implied in the expressions οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ and μορφὴν δούλου λαβών.

[1] This is recognised by Principal Dykes in his suggestive article in the *Expository Times* for January 1906,—as is evident from the line of argument there followed,—though in one place he says that "biblically" the Kenotic theory "has to base itself on its interpretation of the Philippian passage."

Dr. Gifford (*The Incarnation*, pp. 11 ff.) contends that ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων means "being, and continuing to exist, in the form of God"; so that Christ while still being in the form of God took upon Him also the μορφὴ δούλου. But is it not clear that in the Apostle's thought these two μορφαί are not conceived as combined but as radically contrasted, and that the assumption of the latter, the servant's form of existence, implied the renunciation of its antithesis, the divine form of existence or divine δόξα? In that case the μορφὴ θεοῦ is usually regarded as essentially identical with τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ (see Meyer, *in loc.*; Bruce, *Humiliation of Christ*, 4th ed., pp. 13–22). Nor is the meaning substantially altered even if, as some hold, τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ refers not to the equality with God which was Christ's by right and which He yielded up, but to the equality with God which would become His, as acknowledged Lord (ver. 11), through the self-emptying of the Incarnation. On this interpretation, Christ's self-abnegation consisted in His not *eagerly snatching at* (ἁρπαγμός) the honours of κυριότης by the use of "the miraculous powers inherent in His divine nature. Instead of that, He was willing to attain this high dignity by the path of humiliation, suffering, and death" (H. A. A. Kennedy, *Expos. Greek Test.*, *in loc.*). We are thus led back to the same general thought that He could not become the Incarnate Saviour of men without laying aside powers or prerogatives, the possession and exercise of which were inseparable from the divine state or form of existence. Christ was "on an equality with God" before as well as after His Incarnation. Therefore we have still to ask, What, in becoming Incarnate, did He lay aside?

St. Paul in this controverted passage is not writing, *pace* Dr. Gifford, with the technical exactness of a metaphysician; otherwise it would be possible to argue that such expressions as "being made in the likeness (ὁμοίωμα) of men," "being found in fashion (σχήμα) as a man," point to an apparent rather than to a real Incarnation. The one thing perfectly plain is his central and dominating conception of the incom-

parable self-denial which Christ underwent in His assumption of humanity for our redemption. All that the Apostle does, so to speak, is to raise the question: the answer to it is not to be found here or in any of his Epistles, but in the records that tell the story of Christ's life; and it is with these that I have sought to deal in this chapter. The Gospels put beyond dispute, both as regards the intellectual and the moral side of Christ's personality, the genuineness of His human experience. If, then, we are entitled, after the manner of the early Councils, to apply to Him the category of divinity, we are compelled, if we would be true to the facts, to acknowledge that His divinity was self-restrained within the limits and conditions of humanity. Nothing could be more destructive, not only of the spiritual power but of the very credibility of the Christian faith, than to imply that His human nature was but the outer mask of His plenary Deity. Nor is it more credible or more true to the record to speak of His divine mind and His human mind as operative, and lying as it were in juxtaposition, within the same consciousness. In some respects the latter is the more objectionable, in that, while it professes to conserve a real Incarnation, it actually destroys it; and is, in addition, what the former is not, wholly unthinkable.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY ON GOD.

It is distinctively in the realm of the spiritual, and as disclosing to us the final truth of God's character and of man's relation to Him, that Christ's authority rules. But of what type or nature is it within that realm; or, to put it otherwise, in what sense does He constitute for us the norm of our thought as regards God, human duty, and human destiny?

Clearly some definition is needed of the *kind* of authority which belongs to Him. For He does not resolve in any manner the speculative difficulties which have bewildered the greatest philosophic minds in all ages. He has no "proofs" of the Divine Existence to give. When we turn to Him from such a criticism as Kant's or Hegel's of the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments, we feel ourselves in a different world. The metaphysical aspect of the ultimate Reality never concerns Him. His whole mission, indeed, was to reveal and attest that Reality; but He approaches it ethically,

not speculatively. He verifies it to man not by intellectual demonstration, but by the illumination of the total moral experience.

I.

The primary character of all Christ's teaching about God is that it springs from an immediate sense of personal harmony with Him. He speaks of Him not as one who is convinced by argument, but as one who has seen and known because He has experienced. He does not contemplate the divine from without; He bears witness to it from within. His whole life is a conscious and unbroken dependence on the Father, alike in the surrender of prayer and the surrender of service; and this dependence is so absolute as to constitute identity. The two thoughts are inseparable. "I do always the things that please the Father" passes at once into "I and the Father are one."[1] It is this basal fact of profound communion and oneness which inspires all His utterances regarding God and God's purpose toward men, and gives them the accent of absolute assurance. "Whatsoever the Father hath said unto Me, so I speak." And as He does not reach His own knowledge of God as Father by demonstrative reasoning, He does not attempt to convey it to others by demonstration. It is not a deduction

[1] John viii. 29; x. 30.

from something more sure than itself: it is the presupposition of all His thought and feeling, the fundamental truth which gives reality to everything else. The value of every phenomenon, whether inward impulse or natural object, is that it involves God and in its measure manifests Him. But the degree in which anyone perceives this manifestation depends not so much on his intellectual keenness as on his spiritual quality, on his fidelity to the deepest instincts of his nature. Hence Christ's aim was so to quicken these instincts in him as to enable him to see for himself in human life and in the universe around the inevitable suggestions which guarantee the divine.

When, for example, He says, "What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask for a loaf, will give him a stone? . . . If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him,"[1] we may, if we choose, call that an argument for God's Fatherhood. But it is not an argument which has any abstract logical validity. Speculative agnosticism replies that, if the good that is in man can only have sprung from the inspiration of One better than himself, then by parallel reasoning the evil in him that is so universal and persistent suggests a like origin in some greater being; or, at least, that

[1] Matt. vii. 9, 11.

the facts of human nobleness and baseness, of the beneficence and destructiveness of Nature, are so complex and contradictory as to defy any consistent theory. Nor, it will add, does any amount of *finite* goodness in humanity necessarily imply that the goodness of God is perfect and absolute. Obviously, Christ's intention is not to give an irrefragable proof of the Divine Existence. He treats it as an acknowledged truth lying at the roots of all being, and on that basis proceeds to unfold its content by a reference to what is best in human experience. God is to be interpreted by the highest in us, by our purest and most generous affections; that is Christ's central thought, which He asserts but does not attempt to vindicate. To Him it is self-evident, an ultimate certainty, not capable of demonstration and not requiring it; an open secret to be read by every unsophisticated and reverent soul. The Parable of the Prodigal Son has precisely the same significance. It is an appeal to the heart, to the inner being of man as bearing witness that earthly fatherhood is a true though imperfect image of the unchanging love and immeasurable forgivingness of the fatherly heart of God. Therefore, while it is an implicit argument, yet to turn it into a syllogism is to empty it of its force. It is addressed not to the intellect but to the personality; and the response to it is not the endorsement of a demonstration, but the joyous recognition

of a fact directly perceived, the affirmation of it by the deeper self. All Christ's teaching as to the divine moves on this line. He never once speaks from the standpoint of one attempting to remove doubts of God's existence; but always as seeking to recall men to the remembrance of a God whom they have forgotten, or to correct their misconceptions of Him, or to reclaim them to His service. The question for Him is not to prove that God is, but to show *what* He is, and how we should conceive of Him. And the method which He adopts always implies that it is unreasonable to suppose that God's nature or His relation to us can be understood except in the light of what we are, of our personal character and our dealings with others. He reveals God to men by revealing men to themselves, by disclosing the spiritual realities of their own life.

The absence of all metaphysical elements from Christ's teaching is apt to appear to us with our Western habits of mind a grave defect, for it leaves us without guidance in that very sphere where we are impatient for light. The age-long problem coming down to us from the days of ancient Greek speculation—to find some systematised conception of the universe—presses upon us as insistently as ever, and indeed has been in many respects rendered more complex and arduous by modern scientific investigations. But on whom does this problem press? Not on the

mass of men, of whom Swift's words are true that "they are as fit for flying as for thinking," if thinking means philosophy. The higher intellectual questions in any department have no meaning for them. They are as capable of writing an epic poem as of conducting an abstract argument. The philosophers are a highly valuable but relatively small portion of mankind, and the speculative aptitude is as rare and specialised a gift as the mathematical. But if religion is anything it is universal in its characteristic. If God exists at all, it is the profoundest interest of every man to know Him; and as the communication of this knowledge of Himself must be the prime desire of God, He cannot but have so created humanity that it should everywhere contain the possibility of receiving it. The organon whereby we discover Him will require conditions for its development and energetic exercise, but it must be germinally present in the whole race.

Further, it is obvious that no speculative proofs of the Divine Existence yield the results which religion demands. However convinced metaphysically a man may be that God is perfect goodness, that does not of necessity produce in him the spirit of obedience, trust, and love. To know God as Christ knew Him is not an intellectual act, but a personal experience: it means a fellowship between the divine and the human, in which there is a continual giving and receiving.

God verifies Himself not as an idea, but as a power "to kindle or restrain" in every impulse, resolve, and aspiration. We are sure of Him, because of what He is to us, because of the place He has in our life, ruling, rebuking, uplifting. It was this inward and indisputable knowledge which Christ Himself had and which He strove to realise in others. And it is this alone which men are in search of, the transfiguration of character by the indwelling divine. But character is moulded by action far more than by thought. The secret of it lies not in the intellect, but in the will; not in the comprehension of truth, but in practical loyalty to the highest and best. And it is through such loyalty that men gain the evidence which attests to them Duty, God, and Immortality. Nor does the cogency of that evidence depend on the degree in which it can be formally stated and vindicated. In all that constitutes their religious value, these truths may be as vitally held by a peasant as by any doctor of the schools.

Nothing is more certain than this, if we are to pay any regard to the witness of history, or even of the commonest experience. Yet it has been fiercely resented as an insult to human thought, as if "thought" were merely the speculative faculty. No more absurd position could be taken up. Everything that is in man is penetrated with thought,—his feeling, conscience, imagina-

tion, will: he is what he is, because he is a being that thinks. His differentia is reason, but reason assumes many forms, and ratiocination is only one of them.[1] A great painter or sculptor may have no æsthetic theory, and be utterly unable to justify his verdicts. But his intuition for beauty is a thing apart: he sees it, and is unconquerably persuaded of it. In like manner, to feel the greatness of poetry does not mean that you are able to analyse its qualities, or to show why it carries such incomparable effect. In whatever way produced, the fact is recognised as there in its entrancing charm. "I have never," says Macaulay, "written a page of criticism on poetry or the fine arts which I would not burn if I had the power. Hazlitt used to say of himself, 'I am nothing if not critical.' The case with me is directly the reverse. I have a strong and acute enjoyment of works of the imagination; but I have never habituated myself to dissect them. Perhaps I enjoy them the more keenly for that very reason. Such books as Lessing's *Laocoon*, such passages as the criticism on Hamlet in *Wilhelm Meister*, fill me with wonder and despair."[2] The power of appreciating artistic excellence is one thing: the power of giving a luminous and suggestive dissertation on it is quite another. The one is a gift of direct perception;

[1] "Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas." Pascal.

[2] *Life and Letters*, by Trevelyan, vol. ii. p. 8.

the other of intellectual analysis. The latter necessarily implies the former, because only he who possesses the perception can discourse to any profit on its character and ground. But the former does not in any sense presuppose or involve the latter. Macaulay did not require Goethe to convince him of the imaginative splendour of *Hamlet*; his own insight taught him that. What Goethe did for him was to trace out in detail the elements that went to form his impression, to reveal to him fresh points of truth and beauty in what he had previously viewed as a whole and felt to be beautiful; to bring into clearer light the nature and causes of his admiration, and so to confirm it. But the admiration existed before the analysis, and had its roots, not in logical or analytic thought, but in susceptibility to emotional and imaginative truth. Such susceptibility is as real an instrument of reason as the formal categories, and operates largely in a sphere where they have no place.

Poetry is as "rational" as philosophy, and discloses a world of reality which no metaphysic can reach. In an impressive passage of his *Autobiography*, John Stuart Mill tells us how he was delivered from dejected and hopeless moods by the influence of Wordsworth in opening up to him new sources of happiness.[1] He had been trained in a school which distrusted the

[1] J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 146–149.

higher feelings as deceptive, and taught him to seek truth along purely scientific and argumentative lines. With extraordinary ability and persistence, he carried out this principle for many years. When he reached mid-life despondency seized him, his work ceased to satisfy him, his outlook on humanity was darkened. It was the revenge of suppressed emotion. His personality was too rich to be turned into an intellectual machine, and the spiritual poetry of Wordsworth interpreted him to himself, and revealed to him the treasures of secret and *permanent* joy to be found in sympathetic communion with external nature and with the common affections and hopes of man. This emancipation of spirit which endued the world with new interest and made life worth living was gained, not by logical search, but by the recognition of realms of truth not amenable to logical tests. It came to him through the heightening of imaginative feeling, and through the discovery that the universe contained what was fitted to call it forth and respond to it.

Obviously, however, Mill's experience in this respect was due largely to his individual characteristic. A course of Wordsworth could hardly be prescribed as a universal regimen. Appreciation of him demands a certain affinity of soul, and the prescription would have had little chance of success in the case of Mill's own father. Consequently it may be said, even if poetry proves that

certain truths of the highest value to humanity are not attainable by argumentative methods, and that it is therefore no disparagement to religion that it works by intuition, not by demonstration, yet the claim of religion to be a universal necessity is effectually discredited unless it can be shown that the attainment of the truth it reveals is possible to all.

There can be no doubt that for multitudes poetry is a sealed book. They find no charm or beauty in Wordsworth's *Ode on Immortality*, or Keats' *Ode to the Nightingale*. Is the capacity of perceiving it absent in them, or is it simply dormant from want of the necessary conditions for its development? Many who in youth have possessed the power of appreciating great poetry, have gradually lost it through the drawing away of the intellectual energy in other directions, or through the dominant pressure of practical affairs. In some instances the loss might have been averted or lessened by altered habits of self-culture, and still more by altered surroundings; but probably in the majority the original aptitude was feeble at the best. There are vast numbers who at no time of life have shown any such aptitude at all. Imaginative sensibility is a special endowment, and whatever knowledge or inspiration it discloses or secures can never be the heritage of the generality of mankind. This applies to the whole sphere of the æsthetic,

whether painting, or sculpture, or music. The capacities to which they appeal are no property of humanity as such; they are distinctive gifts of the individual. Unless, therefore, religious intuition belongs to a different category from æsthetic, and rests on qualities which are not accidents of human nature, but are of its very essence, the idea of a Gospel for the race is an absurdity.

Now, what is the characteristic mark of man as man? It is the fact of moral responsibility. The ethical instinct has a universal character not belonging to the æsthetic. For even if the latter were germinally present in humanity more widely than we have any reason to suppose, yet it requires exceptional conditions for its evolution. In an environment like that in which the ancient Athenian lived, the dullest perception of beauty might be quickened. But, placed as the vast majority of men are, only a genuine artistic faculty has any chance of realising itself; and in innumerable cases the feeling of beauty, if it exists at all, dies of atrophy. But the moral sense is not dependent on such select opportunities for its continuance. Whatever be the feebleness or brilliancy of a man's intellect, whatever the conditions, narrow or wide-reaching, of his lot, the law of duty remains inseparable from his personality. It is not departmental but central. It exists in every experience, in every

inward impulse or passing mood as well as in the outward activities and relations of his life. Whether he thinks, or desires, or acts, it is equally there. He may be only fitfully conscious of it, and his conception of its demands may be grossly perverted But he has the capacity in him of recognising it in ever higher forms, and of rising to the constant sense of its presence. And this capacity pertains to him not in virtue of this or that endowment or aptitude of mind, but solely because he is a personal being. It is involved not only in thought, specifically so called, but in conduct, in the mere fact of living and acting as a self-determining force. He cannot wholly rid himself of it so long as he is a self at all; and, on the other hand, there is no limit to the keenness and certainty to which it can attain.

II.

It is this fundamental ethical quality in humanity on which Christ seizes as the organon for gaining the true knowledge of God. No words can exaggerate the immense reverence with which He regards it. All the differences which divide men from one another, whether of intellectual power, learning, or station, are, in His view, dwarfed by it into insignificance. It alone covers the whole area of their life; and just in proportion as it operates in proper vigour do

they fulfil the function of manhood or achieve real happiness. Therefore He sets Himself to interpret it, subjects it to a searching examination, traces out its laws, processes and results. And this He does, not in the abstract method of the philosopher, but in the concrete manner of the prophet, who sees the universal in the individual, the eternal in the temporal. He keeps close to life; approaches it on a thousand sides according to the occasion; takes up one experience after another, and lays bare its far-reaching implications. For the single act, be it of fidelity, or compassion, or forgiveness, is not something isolated or self-contained; it draws all its worth from the motive that inspires it, and is the expression of that complex aggregate of qualities which we call character. And as it rises out of these deeps of personality, so it has a reflex influence on that which gave birth to it, and thus points onward to what lies beyond itself, to other and higher acts. It is only one term in a continuous series, being correlated both to a mysterious inner world of thought and feeling and desire, and to an ever-expanding world of outward activity. These interpenetrate in every part: the inward dictating the outward, and the outward reacting with inevitable power on the inward. And this interaction, by which character is gradually built up, is an endless process in which no arrest is possible without violence to the personality.

It may be said this is as true of our intellectual or æsthetic development, for every refusal to advance on these lines also is a detriment to our nature. But what feeling does such a refusal arouse in us? We are conscious that we are forfeiting certain acquirements which would increase our mental interest and power; that we are poorer by so much. Yet, *so far as the loss is merely intellectual or æsthetic*, while we may regret it and wish we had had the energy to persevere, the thought does not humiliate us. We are only humiliated because our intellectual refusal has a moral value; because it is the act of a responsible being in whom the moral underlies every operation of the mind as well as every practical effort. That it is not the intellectual or artistic impoverishment *as such* that creates the consciousness of shame and unrest is shown by the fact that while we recognise readily our ignorance or incapacity in the presence of people whose mental gifts far transcend our own, yet we do not necessarily take any blame to ourselves for the inferiority; but if we are confronted by those who are conspicuous examples of self-control, generosity, patience, we feel abased before them. We never comfort ourselves in this case, as we do in the other, with the thought that such attainments are utterly beyond us: we feel that it is in us to possess them, if we choose, and that it is to our dishonour that we do not.

We are no more lowered in our own esteem by the sight of men of genius than by the sight of men of high station or great wealth; but goodness judges and condemns us. No clearer proof could be given that the ethical is of the essence of man's personality, and that when he ceases to be true to it, he violates his inner self in another sense than is implied in any purely intellectual loss.

The moral judges us, nor is there any stage of our experience at which it ceases to judge us. We are borne on by inward compulsions which are not indeed irresistible but which we can only resist at our peril. However high the standard we have reached, further ideals ever rise up to challenge us with their imperative. We have not produced them: we may not desire them, but none the less they belong to us, or rather we to them: they claim us for their own, and that which is deepest in us responds to the claim. And they all beckon us the same way, towards an ever greater purity, sincerity, self-sacrifice, tenderness, love. Not one of them speaks in any other voice than that of goodness. Whence is it that men are thus impelled and constrained along one ascending line of moral effort, drawn on oftentimes in spite of themselves, so that they curb their most eager passions and "follow the gleam," yet ever the longer they follow it the path grows easier before them and the joy increases? It is,

says Christ, the very presence of God in them. It is He who has made them to be partakers of His own life of blessedness, and the imperatives that urge them upward are the impulses of His Spirit which does not suffer them to be content with anything short of Himself. It is the Father disciplining His children. That is why there is no cessation in the moral ascent. It is the growing discovery and possession of the Infinite.[1] And the reason why the ascent is so hard or at times even hopeless, is that men conceive of righteousness as an impersonal law instead of recognising it as a personal Life which is seeking to impart itself to them. Those aspirations for a complete spiritual manhood are no creation of man, or he could uncreate them: they are "not to be put by" because they are implanted by Him who is the only Perfect Good as the abiding witness to Himself. Men are theomorphic in nature, and to call God Father is not anthropomorphism but the truth. They share the same spiritual being with Him, and on the ground of this kinship they are right in inferring His character from what is noblest and best in themselves.[2]

[1] Cf. J. Kidd, *Morality and Religion*, Lect. VI.

[2] Cf. Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, pp. 78–79. "Like the other Greeks of his time he (Aristotle) did not appreciate the independent worth and dignity of all human beings. Of man in the exercise of his sovereign faculty of pure reason, man akin to the divine and entering well-nigh on immortality through a life of speculative activity, he speaks with a glow and

Thus Christ attests God to us by His penetrative analysis of human experience as an infinitely progressive moral process with a mysterious impelling principle at the heart of it. He begins at the beginning by making plain what the problem is; when that is clear in its fulness and complexity, He holds that the solution is nigh at hand. It is *as men* that we seek to find God, and therefore it is futile to argue about Him until we know ourselves, what our own human nature is in its essential trend, what it points to and what it demands. For we are here in the region of the actual, the intimate, the verifiable. Christ bases Himself on that, on the self-witness of the soul to its own immeasurable forth-reachings, and the constraining power that lies behind them. This is His statement of the question to be answered; and He adds, the only answer to it is God, the existence of One who

with an eloquence that are rare in his pages. But to the life of morality without philosophy he assigns but a second place; differing indeed there from Plato, who, holding that by moral virtue a man becomes like to God, exhibits a deeper insight than Aristotle into the notion of personality. Those who believe that the distinctive being of a man, his inmost self, resides in his moral personality, and that this is a common bond which unites all human beings as such, and gives to each an equal and independent worth, must feel how inadequate was the conception of the Greeks. . . . Not until man was rescued out of the kingdom of nature and taken up into the commonwealth of God and into personal relations with the Divine Being, could he be more than the member of a social organism, or an instrument for achieving the ends of the State. Then only did a universal morality become possible, and the idea of personality receive its full content."

alone possesses in its absolute form the complete spiritual life after which we are inwardly driven to aspire, who Himself has made this aspiration a necessity for us, and who 'gives what He commands.'[1]

John Stuart Mill says that the obligation of duty is "both theoretically acknowledged and practically felt in the fullest manner by many who have no positive belief in God, though seldom, probably, without habitual and familiar reference to Him as an ideal conception."[2] That God should thus persist as an "ideal conception" in the minds of those who have lost all real sense of communion with Him is surely conclusive evidence that the thought of Him is ineradicably bound up with human personality. To say that this idea of Him has no corresponding reality; that speculatively we are compelled to affirm Him as an ultimate conception, while we find no place for Him in actual life; is to stultify humanity by pronouncing it an inherent contradiction. Is it not infinitely more 'reasonable' to hold that that which is indispensable to *thought* must have real relations to *conduct*, even though we personally have not found it so. For Christ also, God is a necessity for thought, but primarily He is a necessity for experience. If it is needful to con-

[1] "Da quod jubes; et jube quod vis." Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. x. chap. 29.

[2] *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 165.

ceive of Him as the unity of all things, it is no less needful to conceive of Him as an abiding presence in the upward struggle of man, as a personal force in life as well as an ideal truth. And if the moral, as we have seen, belongs more than the intellectual to the very essence of our nature, then it is there above all that we should look for the verification of God, and it is there supremely that Christ finds it. Ethics is not religion, but it is the root of it, and in its final issues becomes merged in it.[1]

But the authority of Christ as the revealer of God is not exhausted if we confine ourselves to His teaching; it resides quite as much in what He Himself was. The teaching itself was what it was because of His personality. There is a sense in which this applies to every utterance of a man's thought; but it has a special significance when the sphere of truth with which he deals is ethical. For in this case clear vision largely depends upon character. Our personal assimilation of moral principles incalculably affects our perception of what they truly are. It is possible indeed to quote innumerable instances of keen spiritual knowledge displayed by those whose conduct presented a lamentable contrast to the ideals they proclaimed. None the less, perverted action, though it may not destroy ethical sensibility,

[1] Cf. Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, vol. iii. p. 188.

blurs its keenness and distorts its perspective. The vision may remain, but it lacks the luminous accuracy, the comprehensiveness, the balance, and the final certainty which spring from practical obedience to the highest. And so the searching insight with which Christ read man's needs and possibilities grew out of His unfaltering fidelity. Moreover, this fidelity was a supreme factor co-operating with His teaching in bringing home to men the true character of their own life and the heights to which it was not only possible but imperative that man should rise. They saw in Him a flawless purity, a steadfast purpose of good that never wavered, a gentleness, a compassionateness, a charity that knew no limit. That which was within them as a great longing stood before them as an achievement; and if at any time they felt perplexed by His action, they learned to trust to fuller knowledge for His vindication. He was an external conscience to which the conscience within them growingly responded. The more they lived with Him the better they knew themselves, and the surer they became that what He was they were meant to be.

And alongside of this they saw also that to Him who thus realised what to them was a constraining ideal, God was the *one vital reality*; that He dwelt in the abiding consciousness of the Father; wrought no work without seeking His

guidance and receiving His grace; met every surprise of temptation or disaster as having its appointed place in the wise order of an overruling purpose that cannot be taken by surprise and has prepared from of old for the emergencies of every passing hour. The unmistakable accent of assurance with which He spoke of the Father and His claim upon men, the perpetual reference to One that sent Him, whose will it was His 'meat' to do, the relief and exaltation which He found in prayer, showed incontestably that the life which so humbled and inspired them was grounded in God, and drew from a divine communion its beauty and glory. Now they could verify that life as the obligatory *ethical* type for themselves, for humanity; and so the God without whom it had not been was guaranteed to them with equal certainty, and faith in Him became for them indissolubly blended with the paramountcy of the moral law. Their own experience in a measure attested God, but it was inconstant, precarious, so that in some moods only could they apprehend Him with clear conviction. They were conscious, however, that these were just the moods in which they lived their best life; that as they grew in purity their vision of Him cleared, that as they 'did the will' they came to know of the doctrine. Duty and God being thus correlatives, they felt that it was natural for Him who fulfilled all righteous-

ness to attain as none other could to the divine certainties. Because He was for them the standard of moral obligation, He was likewise the standard of the true knowledge of God. On both subjects He became the final authority.

III.

How then, it may be asked, are there so many to whom Christ does not attest God, in whom His witness to the Father awakes no living response? If He appeals to that which is universal in man, why does His message not "find" them? In one sense that is an old problem, which Christ Himself had to face in the days of His ministry. Yet to-day it assumes a somewhat altered form. Those on whom His message made no impression, or whom it influenced but for the moment, never disputed the *existence* or government of God. What they refused to receive was Christ's teaching as to God's *character*, and His claim to be the supreme revealer of the Father's will to men. Now He never in a single instance admitted that they had a right to stand aloof, or that His word had no title to their allegiance. The Parable of the Sower, as interpreted by Himself, makes this clear. The different kinds of natures in which the Gospel of the Kingdom cannot grow to perfection are not unfruitful of necessity. They have become what they are

through their own voluntary action in submitting to the sway of influences perilous or alien: to indifference, to mere emotionalism and lack of steadfastness, to absorption in worldly interests. They are responsible for their own barrenness. This is His invariable tone. He traces spiritual blindness or unbelief to the *Will*, to a refusal to welcome what is recognised even faintly as true or good. This deflection of character, when continued, ends in the gross perversion of the judgment. "Ye *will* not come to Me, that ye may have life." "My teaching is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man *willeth* to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God or whether I speak from Myself."[1]

The same causes which Christ assigned for the rejection by the Pharisees and Sadducees of His revelation of God's *character* operate to-day in producing disbelief in the very *existence* of God. A large proportion of the religious scepticism that prevails is the direct result of moral depravity, of disloyalty to the dictates of conscience. And the fact is none the less true, though some of those to whom it applies would resent the suggestion. The heart is waxed gross, and the ears are dull of hearing. The theoretical doubt regarding God is preceded and created by the

[1] John v. 40; vii. 16, 17. "Character," says Novalis, "is a completely fashioned Will."

practical negation of Him. He is not in all their thoughts, because the working of His Spirit has been so persistently extruded from their lives.

On the other hand, it is obvious that some to whom God is no more than an "ideal conception," if He is even that, are, so far as human observation and insight can judge, among the most unselfish and high-minded of men. They are transparently sincere, generous, compassionate: above all, devotees of truth, ready to sacrifice themselves in the search for it. Why then, if God be the final reality, do they so utterly fail to find Him? Why are their eyes holden that they cannot see Him? In many cases it is because they are possessed with too narrow an idea of what Truth is, and of the conditions necessary for reaching it. During the last generation or two the dazzling discoveries of physical research have so absorbed many minds as to lessen their interest in other spheres of thought and inquiry. The methods by which these results were attained have fascinated them, and have led them to think that no truth is worthy of acceptance unless it can be brought to the plain test of easily observed fact or immediate and conclusive experiment. Professor Clifford, for example, declares with characteristic emphasis that "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything on insufficient

evidence." And what he means by evidence, he illustrates by an apologue. A shipowner, he says, was about to send off an emigrant ship. She was old, and not over well built at the first; she had made many voyages, and undergone frequent repairs; and doubts had been suggested to him of her seaworthiness. These doubts preyed upon his mind, and he thought perhaps he ought to have her overhauled and refitted, though it should cost him much. But before the ship sailed, he succeeded in quieting his fears. She had weathered many storms, and could surely weather many more. He would dismiss from his thoughts all ungenerous suspicions of the honesty of builders and contractors and put his trust in Providence, which could hardly fail to protect the unhappy families that were leaving their fatherland to seek better times elsewhere. In such ways he acquired a sincere and comfortable conviction that his vessel was safe and seaworthy. He watched her departure with a light heart, and benevolent wishes for the success of the exiles in their strange new home that was to be; and he got his insurance money when she went down in mid-ocean and told no tales. What shall we say of him? "Surely this," adds Professor Clifford, "that he was verily guilty of the death of those men. It is admitted that he did sincerely believe in the soundness of his ship; but the sincerity of his conviction can in no wise

help him, because *he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him.*"[1]

Certainly; we all agree. The illustration, however, excellently brings out the scientific idea of a warrantable belief, that it can always be incontestably established by an easy reference to simple facts. Yet Professor Clifford knew well that in the case of a vast mass of human beliefs, their rightness or wrongness cannot be verified beyond cavil, like our conviction of a ship's seaworthiness. Take our conceptions of justice, truth, beneficence. Why should they be accepted as the governing rules of conduct? Because "they answer," says Professor Clifford himself, "to certain definite instincts which are certainly within us, however they came there"; that it is right to obey them can be verified by "immediate personal experience."[2] But experience does more than verify our belief, say, in beneficence; it helps to create or intensify it. We do not demand that the belief should be verified before we act on it. It is first an instinct battling with other and selfish instincts; but we throw ourselves upon it, treat it as true, and by treating it as true we find it to *be* true. And if a man will not trust himself to it, but keeps insisting that it should first be proved to be a right principle of conduct, then he

[1] W. K. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, vol. ii. pp. 163–164.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 193.

will never acquire the belief at all. Suppose that he is wealthy, and that the appeal on behalf of some struggling hospital touches his instinct of generosity; suppose that instead of acting on this conviction he balances it, not against other claims on his liberality, but against the counter instinct of self-regard and acquisition, and begins to fear that if he gives help in this case he may be inundated with pestering applications, then whatever belief he had in generosity will be enfeebled, and in time will almost cease to exist. Nor will he necessarily pay the penalty by conscious unhappiness. He may be practically content with his narrow circle of interests. The penalty that falls upon him is the contraction of his nature and the loss of the higher satisfactions. So, on the contrary, the proof that convinces a man that generosity is right, is just the fuller life that it brings him, the sense of inward harmony, the joy of the larger self. It is pre-eminently a personal and, in a sense, incommunicable belief.[1] Should others dispute it, he cannot prove it to them as a shipowner can prove to the world that his vessel is seaworthy. They will say it rests on most "insufficient evidence." And his reply will be:

[1] "We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it that we can only tell it from pain *by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good.*" G. Eliot, *Romola*, Epilogue.

'You don't take the only course of finding out whether it is sufficient or not. You can verify it if you choose, as well as I.'

The belief in God is of this order. Ever since men have awaked through the teaching of Christ to the infinite nature of duty and the endless needs and capacities of the soul, His declaration that man is the child of the eternal Father, and loved and disciplined by Him, strikes an answering chord. There are facts which seem adverse: but, *on the whole*, that doctrine alone affords any real, though it may be an incomplete, explanation of what man is, and is constrained to strive after.[1] It may only be a probability, more or less great, but there are those who throw themselves upon it, give it its proper place in their thought and conduct, act as if it were true, and lo! they find, if we are to trust their own account of it, that it verifies itself to them in precisely the same manner as any moral principle, that it enriches their being, draws out new powers, opens to them deep sources of joy and peace.[2] To tell them that their belief is a subjective notion, and has no reality corresponding to it in the universe, will have no more effect on them, and ought to have no more effect, than the assertion of Mr. Worldly Wiseman that generosity is a mere sentiment created by weakness, not an imperative law.

[1] Cf. *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, pp. 329–330 (Eversley ed.).
[2] Cf. Dale, *Christ and the Future Life*, pp. 17–19.

They will answer: As generosity attests its truth by what it enables me to become, so in an infinitely higher degree does my faith in God. It cleanses my moral vision, braces my will, turns duty from an outward command to an inward desire, and creates a peace in the heart deeper than all conflict. And it does so *because my nature has been made that way.*

This belief in the Father differs from the typical beliefs of science in one respect, in that it is not primarily intellectual, but rooted in the personality. The data on which it rests are not always there ready to hand. A truth of chemistry or physics can be demonstrated at any time. The proof of it can be given as readily to-morrow as to-day; for the facts that vindicate it are outside of us and constant with the fixity of nature. Our conviction of it is unchanging, or can be renewed at will. But belief in God varies with what we are; it is coloured and affected by passing moods. No man can retain it in its full vigour unless he continues to fulfil the conditions. The saint who finds in it the brightness of his life may so forget himself that it becomes but a flickering light. It may go by degrees, for it came by degrees. Like the sense of duty, it is an instinct; and the characteristic of it is, as Bagehot says, "not that it is irresistible, but that it is *developable.*"[1]

[1] *Literary Studies*, vol. iii. p. 185. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 186–187. "The unbelieving moods of each mind are as certain as the unbelieving

And so its growth may easily be arrested, not merely by moral perverseness, but simply by refraining from giving heed to it; by allowing other facts or interests of life to preoccupy and absorb us, by underrating its value through judging it by scientific or metaphysical tests which are no more applicable to it than to any fundamental moral conviction. And as it evidently points to a fellowship between the human and the divine, it is not reasonable to expect that it can develop without the employment of those positive means by which every fellowship between spirits becomes real and vital, without cherishing the desire for communion, without the opening of the nature in aspiration and response. At first it may be but a venture, but it is a *venture which must be made* if we are ever to attain the knowledge of the Father.[1]

state of much of the world. But no sound mind permits itself to be permanently disturbed, though it may be transiently distracted, by these variations in its own state. We have a *criterion* faculty within us, which tells us which are lower moods and which are higher. This faculty is a phase of conscience, and if at its bidding we struggle *with* the good moods and *against* the bad moods, we shall find that great beliefs remain, and that mean beliefs pass away."

[1] Professor Paulsen says, "The final and highest truths—the truths by which, and for which, a man lives and dies—do not rest upon scientific knowledge, but have their origin in the heart, in the essential principle of will." *Immanuel Kant: His Life and Doctrine*, p. 392. Much of the best work done in recent years in the philosophy of religion and morals has been the vindication of

It is not too much to say that the entire mental bias of those who are the exponents of what is called "modern thought" indisposes them to make that venture. In comparison with the certainties of the external world, and its unvarying succession of definitely ascertained antecedents and consequents, faith in God seems to them but a shimmering vision born of feeling and imagination. It vanishes into thin air when tried by the critical standards which have approved themselves as indispensable in their scientific investigations. It appears, moreover, to be contradicted by ugly facts in nature and in the life of man. And so they dismiss it into the region of baseless fancies, where it dies a natural death. They are so afraid of being duped that they never give it any chance to grow, as alone it has grown in the experience of religious souls. Therefore, though absolutely honest in the pursuit of truth, they have unconsciously put one department of it quite out of their reach. Their doubt or denial of God's existence is invalidated for this reason, that even if He did exist and could be known by man, it would be impossible for them to find Him on their lines of inquiry. And as Professor William James says, "a rule of thinking

the primacy of the will in personality, and of its corollary that only by acting on a moral conviction when it is no more than a probable hypothesis do we reach the proof of its truth. See especially the incisive treatment of the question in the first four essays of Professor James' *Will to Believe.*

which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth, if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule."[1]

And if it be the case, as it is, that those who have given to the world the most thrilling examples of heroic virtue, wonderful for humility, patience, and unfailing self-sacrifice, have been quickened and vitalised by the Christian view of God, it is surely futile to say that this concomitance has no root in the ultimate reality of things. When Mill tells us that even now it would not be easy "even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life,"[2] one can only wonder that he should so lightly esteem the witness which Christ bears to the Father. For this is not a matter of intellectual illumination like science or scholarship in which the greatest thinker partakes necessarily of the limitations of his time; nor, above all, does it, like either of these, stand in merely accidental relation to the personal character. On the contrary, it is pre-eminently an outgrowth of character. It is not more plain that Christ achieved a unique ethical wisdom than that He ascribed it to His abiding fellowship with God, and that not a single quality in Him would have remained the same, had this consciousness of the Father's presence and love

[1] *Will to Believe*, p. 28. [2] *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 255.

been eliminated. It is no accident that He who alone in history not merely saw but realised the moral ideal of humanity had the pulse of His being in God. He remains to all ages the final proof that belief in the Father is inherently correlated to the highest moral life of man.

IV.

It is from the standpoint of this inward conviction — namely, that faith in God is wrought into the very texture of our being and involved in all experience—that Christ faces the facts of human life and outward nature which seem to challenge the doctrine of the Fatherhood. He does not attempt to justify argumentatively "the ways of God to man"; He has no theodicy to propound. There is no more perplexing problem for theistic belief than that raised by some forms of human calamity or suffering. Though Christ refers often to the subject, and utters the most penetrating sayings, He always speaks as if He felt no need of a theoretical solution and no desire for it. He emphatically repudiates the idea that the divine justice can be vindicated on the theory that a man's suffering is proportioned to his sin. "Those eighteen, on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay." Yet in the

same breath He adds significantly, "But, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."[1] That he who sins must suffer, whether sooner or later, is of course Christ's fundamental conception, just as it is, so to speak, the presupposition of His redemptive mission. But He points out that the penalty is often postponed through the forbearance of God, who makes His sun to rise on the evil as well as the good, and thus that there are great tracts of human experience in which there is no equivalence between character and outward lot. Yet it is not too much to say that it is not the retributive, but the educational and salutary, aspect of suffering which is most prominent in His teaching; not the inexplicable element in it, even in those cases where it seems most undeserved, but its manifold moral significance. "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."[2] Loss, whether self-imposed or inflicted from without, cannot but mean gain, if it has been endured out of fidelity to goodness. Voluntary sacrifice is the source of the deepest joy, and subserves the growing good of the world. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."[3]

That suffering is a supremely moral factor

[1] Luke xiii. 4, 5. [2] Matt. x. 39; v. 10. [3] John xii. 24.

even where it is not explicable by personal sin, is involved in all Christ's references to the sorrows and martyrdoms of the faithful; and it has been borne home to the heart of humanity still more by what He was than by what He said. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not scruple to say of Him who was separate from sinners that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered,"[1] thus implying that the holiest manhood, just because it is manhood, requires the education of suffering. Obviously, if pain has a direct bearing on the development of the good in man, and not simply on the elimination of the evil that is in him, that makes the talk about the injustice of inflicting it on the righteous largely irrelevant. If the only benefit which accrued from it were not to the sufferer but to his neighbours, it might be argued that the rights of the individual had been violated: but when he himself, however noble, may yet be further enriched by it, then the problem becomes one within the man's own personality; it is a problem of the correlation of his suffering not only to his sin, but to the necessities of his spiritual evolution. Even people who think they can definitely gauge his faults will admit that the estimate of what his moral growth requires is a little beyond them, and so be led to lower their tone in speaking of the "divine injustice." It is, however, the

[1] Heb. v. 8.

other aspect of Christ's suffering—the effect it had, not on Himself, but on the destiny of the race — which chiefly absorbed the apostolic thought, and has stirred men everywhere to a wondering reverence. Ever since the Cross became the symbol of salvation, and the agonies of the Holy One the regeneration of the world, they have felt how hollow it is to regard sorrow as merely retributive, and how closely related it is to all that makes life great.

By disclosing to us these various moral uses of pain which our own experience corroborates, Christ has enormously lightened the pressure of its mystery. But he has not *removed* it, and He could not remove it. When He says to the Jews, in reference to the affliction of the man born blind, "Neither did this man sin nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him,"[1] He states what is quite obvious, that the sufferer's calamity afforded an opportunity, which would not otherwise have existed, for displaying helpfulness and mercy. The purpose of evil is to draw out the good, to call forth its energies into ever fuller activity. Daily observation confirms this by teaching us how much of the soul's finest tenderness and patience is due to the witness of helpless pain and misery around it. But it would be a grave misapprehension if we took Christ's remark as

[1] John ix. 3.

representing His total view regarding the "final cause" of the man's blindness. It would be a very imperfect apologia if we could only say that a man was visited with misfortune that his neighbours might be stimulated to show compassion and brotherliness by its removal. We know from other sayings of Christ already referred to that the affliction itself is a moral discipline to the sufferer, and is meant to foster in him, as it often does foster, the nobler qualities of courage and submission. The works of God which it inspires are not only the sympathy and beneficence shown by others, but also the new spirit of gratitude and kindliness aroused in the recipient of them.

Yet, if anyone press the further question, Why should *this* man have been the sufferer instead of being one of the benefactors? no final answer can be given. We can see that the general conditions of man's life have a rational and moral character, but by no possibility can we show their rightness in the individual case. Only, it then becomes part of a far wider problem which traverses life from end to end. Why is one man born rich and another poor; one with intellectual gifts which mark him out for a leader, and another with powers that no training could raise above the average? Why were the mighty works not done in Tyre, if it would have repented in sackcloth and ashes? We might ask such questions *ad infinitum*. They run themselves

up into the two ultimate principles that govern human existence,—individuality and the solidarity of the race. Conundrums of this kind would always be possible, unless all contrasts were eliminated from humanity, and men were made facsimiles of one another; and these contrasts, which belong to the very nature of personality, are largely moulded by the law of heredity and the corporate character of human life. An individual is not an isolated particular, or with relations only to God as his Creator: he is quite as really related to other human beings; starts with a definite inheritance, intellectual and moral, because he comes in a certain descent; and has his lot in every respect affected by the action of his predecessors and contemporaries. As he suffers for his father's sins, so he suffers for the faults of those around him. If he is poisoned by sewage gas, the blame rests not a little with the workmen who laid the drains. If he goes out with a shooting party, he may be killed by the random shot of a careless marksman. In these cases it would be clearly absurd to treat his death as an immediate act of God, and on this ground to arraign the divine justice.[1] At least the arraignment has no point except so far as it is an impeachment of the whole existing order of God's government of the world. For the entire structure of human life, as He has appointed it,

[1] Cf. Tennant, *Origin of Sin*, p. 133.

is based on two facts: the responsibility of the individual for his own acts, and the inevitable passing over of the consequences of these acts into other lives. God could only prevent the bad workman or marksman from causing death to others by depriving him of his freedom to shape his own course, which would mean depriving us of ours; in fact, the destruction of human personality. The sins that we know most about are our own; and if we feel we cannot lay the blame of *them* upon God, is it rational to lay the blame of other people's upon Him? And if the objection is that the errors committed by one should bring suffering to another wholly innocent, then it must be remembered that the same law which makes this possible is the source of all the transmitted good in humanity; that without it no parent could influence his child, no loving heart take upon itself the burdens of the weak. Destroy these principles of responsibility and solidarity, and you have no moral world at all. Nothing is easier than to draw up plans of the universe on paper.

> "Ah, Love! could you and I with Him conspire
> To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
> Would we not shatter it to bits,—and then
> Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!"[1]

It is well for our ingenious selves that we cannot make the experiment.

[1] Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyám*, stanza 99.

And so, as was said above, Christ could not remove the mystery that attaches to individual suffering. For though it is an individual problem, yet it has infinitely complex social causes and effects. How far, on the one hand, it has been due to the faults of the sufferer, and how far, on the other, to the misdeeds of others, dead or living; of what nature, and how wide-reaching are the influences which as a discipline it is meant to produce on him and on the world,—these are points which neither he nor we have the data for pronouncing upon. We cannot even ask a tenth part of the questions involved, far less answer them. And we have no reason to suppose that they lay within Christ's purview more than within ours. "What men require," says Bishop Butler, "is to have all difficulties cleared; and this is, or at least for anything we know to the contrary it may be, the same as requiring to comprehend the Divine nature, and the whole plan of Providence from everlasting to everlasting."[1] Christ teaches us that a speculative solution is not necessary for our deliverance from these perplexities,—that peace lies near at hand and in the power of all. He shows us, by what He said and by what He was, how any man through loyalty to the instincts of his moral nature, can verify the Father as a present power *in his own life*, and how this conviction, founded on inward experience, grows

[1] *Analogy*, Part ii. chap. 8.

into personal assurance: how the most untoward disasters to himself or others, *when looked at in this light*, cease to be cruel irrelevancies, become luminous with moral meanings and potencies, and are the indubitable means of unveiling to him hidden truths and educing capacities hitherto unknown. Therefore just as a man finds the final attestation of God not in this or that separate argument, but in the fuller self-realisation which faith in Him brings, so the conclusive proof to him that the outward calamities that crush and desolate are meant to subserve a spiritual purpose, is that when he regards them from this point of view his nature gains in vitality, in strength, in clearness of vision, in inward peace. He henceforth works his life on this principle, lays himself open on all sides to the moral obligations and lessons they disclose, and discovers that they carry with them an ever-deepening revelation of discipline and benediction. He does not deem God responsible for the shattering misfortunes that come through the direct action of men, but he sees none the less that God is in them and makes them conduce to moral ends for those who have the heart to learn. *And for those only*; since there is no reason to expect that outward disasters, any more than any other experience whatsoever, will of themselves and apart from our attitude to them convey a blessing to us. Nor is it surprising to him that tragic

cruelties should occur which seem almost unalleviated wrong; partly because he recognises the possibilities of man's freedom in defying God's will, both by the infliction of suffering and by the refusal to be taught by suffering; and partly because he realises that he cannot trace out the moral results that actually ensue in the labyrinth of human relations. What he does perceive convinces him that the central trend of things is beneficent, and he is therefore persuaded that, if he knew more of the universe, that which now appears most alien would become a fresh confirmation of his faith that "the very hairs of our head are all numbered."

V.

As Christ teaches us to interpret the external events of life that perplex us from the standpoint of a faith in God which verifies itself in our own experience, so He applies the same method of interpretation to Nature. It is because He finds the Father within that He finds Him without; that is, it depends on what we are ourselves, whether we see a present God in the universe. Goethe in a majestic psalm proclaims an absolute antithesis between humanity and nature. "Let man be noble, helpful and good, for that alone distinguishes him from all beings that we know. No feeling has nature: to good and bad gives

the sun his light, and for the evil-doer as for the best shine moon and stars."[1] Christ employs the same comparison and turns it to a precisely opposite purpose. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good."[2] He not merely regards the bestowal of sunshine on the unworthy as an evidence of the divine long-suffering, but He draws from that an argument for *human* forgiveness and charity. If, however, we confine our thoughts merely to the natural phenomenon of the sun's constancy, Goethe's is the more exact reading of the fact, *viz.*: that it suggests not forbearance towards the sinful, but rather indifference to moral distinctions. The forbearance is only found there by one who has already found

[1] "Edel sei der Mensch,
Hülfreich und gut!
Denn das allein
Unterscheidet ihn
Von allen Wesen,
Die wir kennen . . .

Denn unfühlend
Ist die Natur:
Es leuchtet die Sonne
Über Bös' und Gute,
Und dem Verbrecher
Glänzen, wie dem Besten,
Der Mond und die Sterne."

Das Göttliche.

[2] Matt. v. 44-45.

God as the fundamental reality in his own experience. It is not that he, by a "pathetic fallacy," attributes ethical meaning to that which has none; he discovers it to *be* there, but he only discovers it there, because he has first discovered it elsewhere, in the deeps of his own nature, and has thus acquired the moral vision to perceive it everywhere.[1]

It is sometimes said that Christ saw God's care in the physical universe, because He had not our conception of inexorable natural law, of the unvarying sequences of things, and that it would have been impossible for Him to preach to-day the same childlike confidence in a Fatherly providence. Take, however, His warning against anxiety, on the ground that God clothes the lilies with beauty, though "they toil not, neither do they spin." He knew as well as we that the growth of a lily was conditioned by a complexity of natural influences—soil, atmosphere, rain, and sunshine. But that did not hinder Him from recognising a divine power underlying and governing the manifold process; which at no time appeared visibly apart from the process, but always and everywhere in it. Even if the whole physical universe were as much of a natural unity as a lily, with no point in it at which God visibly and personally interposes, but produced like the

[1] Compare Tennyson's view; see Bradley, *A Commentary on "In Memoriam,"* pp. 55 ff.

lily by an evolutionary process, it would equally for Christ be a manifestation of the divine goodness. He knew also as well as we that the lily was under no such temptation to over-anxiety as besets struggling humanity. But He meant that the same beneficent purpose which controlled the lily's growth was as truly at work through all the laborious life of man, and that it was man's wisdom to realise this, as it was his prevailing weakness to forget it. Modern evolutionary facts and theories would not affect Christ's essential attitude. The increase of scientific knowledge may alter indeed the character of our prayers. If we regard rainfall as not wholly determined by laws inherent in nature from the first, we can rightly enough offer petitions for fair weather. But if we come to believe that it is as subject to natural law as the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, then we will no more think of presenting such petitions than of asking God to prolong the daylight for an hour. We will still pray, but our prayer will change its content: it will be, not a request for the modification of natural processes which we now conceive to be unalterably fixed by His will, but an approach to Him in adoration, gratitude and submission, and in supplication for spiritual help.

From these and other illustrations which Christ draws from the material world, we see that He ordinarily kept His eye on those sides of Nature's

life which are harmonious and benign. But there are other sides which have to be taken account of,—the appalling terrors of avalanche, lightning, and volcano. What are we to say of them, and of their compatibility with the Christian view of God? In one sense they are as capable of conveying moral discipline to us as are the atrocities committed by man, inasmuch as they may be as directly operative in evoking in humanity high qualities of compassion and helpfulness. But they have this peculiar difficulty that they proceed, though not immediately from divine action, yet from a system whose laws and methods have been determined by God, and are undeflected in their working by human sin. The problem presses upon us to-day more than upon those of an earlier time, for modern science has immensely widened our knowledge of the extent to which these horrors exist, especially in the predatory instincts of the animal world, where Nature seems "red in tooth and claw." We shudder at the revelation of such universal suffering and carnage, and feel at first as if it were impossible to retain our belief in the goodness of One who has appointed a created order which inherently involves them. Yet the impression thus produced is largely due to lack of perspective. Our attention is absorbed by the fresh disclosures made to us, and we lose sight of their setting in the universe. No phenomenon can be rightly judged

as an isolated thing: it has meaning only in reference to the whole of which it forms a part. If science has taught us anything, it has taught us this. It has shown that those very facts in the physical world which so distress us are the outcome of the same forces whose action conditions all health and happiness. There is every reason to believe that, so far as the lower animals are concerned, the problem of their suffering is greatly aggravated for us by our imaginative attribution to them of those anticipative fears and other forms of sensitiveness which belong only to rational creatures, and that there is an enormous preponderance of pleasure over pain in their life. If the essential meaning of the universe be good, we are in no position to draw up an indictment against it on the ground of what we term defects, yet which even *we* can see to be in some measure inextricably involved in the production of the general result.[1] We may indeed amuse ourselves by imagining schemes of a physical life in which enjoyment would be unintermittent, and the capacity of pleasure would not imply susceptibility to pain; but it will ordinarily be found that we have endowed our material Utopia with attributes that belong only to the world of the spiritual and the eternal.

Still further, the physical sphere is correlated to the moral: it is the foundation on which the

[1] Cf. Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, i. 385–388; ii. 88–97.

moral is built; it points onward to it as its goal. The lower can only be understood in the light of the higher which grows out of it. The end explicates the beginning. Hence the spiritual is the norm by which the material must be judged: it is the key of its interpretation; it brings into clearness what is there dim. In the purely animal creation we find the altruistic as well as the egoistic instinct, but the latter is the prevalent and dominating one. These instincts are the physiological basis of human self-sacrifice and self-assertion, but in humanity they become moral principles, and the former is recognised gradually but inevitably as the supreme and imperative law. And just as God's being must be defined in terms of life rather than of inorganic nature, so it must be defined in terms of ethical rather than of physical life. Why He should have created a universe which in many of its parts is so imperfect a manifestation of Himself and conceals rather than reveals His higher attributes, may remain a mystery. But we cannot fail to see that it tends increasingly towards the revelation of the ethically highest. Hence even if we have to acknowledge a wide range of facts in the lower stages of evolution which appear to conflict with our moral judgment, that does not shake the confidence with which we pronounce the whole to be governed by a righteous and loving purpose. To do otherwise would be to allow that

which is ultimate, intelligible and clear to be subordinated to what is partial and uncomprehended.[1]

It was thus that Nature was viewed by him who of all poets has been justly acclaimed its truest interpreter. To Wordsworth, as Mr. John Morley says, it was "not a theatre on which men play their parts, but an animate presence, intermingling with our works, pouring its companionable spirit about us, and 'breathing grandeur upon the very humblest face of human life.'"[2] He has brought out with astonishing keenness and insight "how exquisitely" the mind and the external world are fitted to each other, and what "with blended might" they create; and contends that

> "The discerning intellect of man
> When wedded to this goodly universe
> In love and holy passion"

may find the ancient dreams of Paradise and Elysian groves "a simple produce of the common day."[3] Through this intercommunion of the spirit with the outward realities of earth and sea and sky, he himself found the secret of clear vision, wide sympathies, steadfast resolve; and what he gained he has enabled others to gain

[1] This point is more fully discussed in my *Christ of History and of Experience*, Note 25, on "The Apparent Antagonism between Nature and the Moral Life," pp. 422 ff. See also Illingworth's Essay on the Problem of Pain in *Lux Mundi*.

[2] *Studies in Literature*, p. 48.

[3] *The Recluse.*

too. Mr. Morley qualifies his tribute by remarking, in a sense truly, that Wordsworth was "not energetically alive to the blind and remorseless cruelties" of Nature. Science unveils to us "raking horrors" which he did not know, or from which he deliberately averted his eye; and so his proclamation of the fortifying and ennobling messages of Nature seems to many little better than moonshine. But it is Wordsworth, not the scientific investigator, who gives the truer reading. Cruelty is no more the salient characteristic of Nature's life than of man's. It is present in both: but in both the central meaning is not discord, but harmony; not pain, but joy. Experience has abundantly verified this to those who have learned from him to "feed their mind" in a wise passiveness. But the verification will never come except to "a heart that watches and receives." It was because Wordsworth was a purified spirit that he saw "into the life of things," and Nature gave back to him her best, "led him from joy to joy," and so "built up his being."

Yet the form which his message takes is so shaped by his transcendent imaginative and reflective gift as to limit the range of its influence. His interpretation of Nature's beneficence makes but a sectional appeal, Christ's a universal. For the appreciation of its truth, Christ demands nothing but what the simplest mind can give,

and the commonest lot supply. He takes the ethical instinct embedded in the race, quickens and intensifies it, and so draws out its manifold witness to an impelling and regulative Goodness that any man who "wills" it may attain the assurance of God as a disciplinary and gracious power in his own soul. Further, he who attains it finds that this irrepressible conviction regarding what is within him is echoed back in numerous voices from the world without; and echoed ever more fully as he himself grows in the life he knows to be best, in purity, docility, reverence. When Nature speaks to him in what seem jarring notes, he no more takes these as the expression of her deepest truth than he takes the rebellious humours of his own soul for the principle of his conduct. No conceivable future discoveries of the suffering wrought by physical law can impair this verdict, while man's own nature remains what it is. Christ, and Christ alone, has made this sure; and therefore He is eternally the Way to the Father.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY ON INDIVIDUAL DUTY.

It is in the moral nature of man that Christ finds the basis of the verification of the Father. But the verification comes only through Christ Himself; for without Him the ethical instinct would remain undeveloped, unconscious of its full content and significance. Both by what He says and by what He is, He draws it out, unfolds its infinite implications, confronts men in His own person with its embodied ideal, an ideal which attests at every point the Father's presence. It is through Him that they attain those quickened perceptions of duty which enable them to recognise Him as the fulfilment of the moral law; and then they perceive that this fulfilment on His part has only been realised through the constant reception of the Father's life. Thus Christ attests to them that the source of all noble character and the secret of peace lie in the filial spirit; and He attests further that it is God's supreme purpose to communicate this

spirit to all men however unworthy, that His love goes all lengths of sacrifice to make it theirs, by redeeming them from the thrall of sin which destroys it. To possess it is, in Christ's view, the "one thing needful."

He begins with the moral and so explicates it that it ends in the affirmation of the spiritual; and then He shows how the spiritual as centre radiates out into the fulness of moral obligation. He starts from duty and reaches God, and then the fellowship of God becomes the true and final revelation of duty. It was this fellowship that dictated, according to the particular circumstances, the various forms of His own duty,—His words, His acts, His whole bearing. These cannot be severed from the root out of which they grew, as if they had an independent value. The habit of thus isolating them and treating them as absolute rules, has done much to misrepresent the real character of Christ's authority in the sphere of conduct. His teaching, indeed, easily lends itself to this misconception. He often speaks in gnomes and maxims; the idea is set forth in unconditioned phrase, not correlated with other aspects of truth. And the vivid, picturesque expression which He gives it, burns it into the memory. Each principle shines by itself as a point of light. It is the Oriental manner of utterance, occasional, disconnected, imaginative, which the Western mind with its love of precision

and systematic arrangement readily misunderstands.

I.

The passive endurance of wrong could not be more strongly enunciated than in the saying, "Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."[1] Tolstoy and others have drawn from it their doctrine of universal non-resistance. Taking the words as they stand and as expressing the whole mind of Christ on the subject, that is the natural interpretation. But they do not express His whole mind; they give one phase of it only, of infinite moment no doubt, but not exclusively true, and requiring the supplement of other aspects of obligation. Christ Himself, when struck by the officer of the High Priest, remonstrated against the insult: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?"[2] He did not submit silently to the injury and turn the other cheek. Again, in His instructions to the disciples as to the treatment of offenders, there is no hint of unresisting submission. "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two

[1] Matt. v. 39. [2] John xviii. 23.

witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the Church: and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican."[1] Professor Seeley in a memorable passage[2] endeavours to reconcile these two contrasted utterances by the theory that Christ is referring to two different types of offenders: that He commands uncomplaining endurance when the injury is committed by a heathen, but insists on expostulation and rebuke when the injury is inflicted by a Christian. And the reason of the distinction, says Professor Seeley, is that the Christian is one who recognises the brotherhood of men, and in doing wrong to another violates his own principle; while the heathen acknowledges no such law, and regards those who are not bound to him by any special tie of kinship or of treaty as rivals and enemies. Therefore the former sins against light, and is a proper subject of resentment: the latter sins in ignorance, and anger against him is misplaced; he is to be brought to a better mind by "unexpected retaliations of kindness." The Jew, adds Professor Seeley, came under the same category as the Christian, for he was the possessor of a certain crude Christianity: his religion contained at least the germs of the Christian humanity in its doctrine of the unity of God and of the creation of

[1] Matt. xviii. 15–17. [2] *Ecce Homo*, chap. xxiii.

man in God's image. Hence an offence done by him was also to be resented by a Christian, and not to be passively tolerated, as was the wrong-doing of a heathen.

This explanation seems to me to be in the last degree unlikely. It is exposed to the same objection which Professor Seeley so often urges with unquestionable force against other interpretations of Christ's words: it turns His moral maxims into rigid rules. It represents Him as dividing men into two sections, and as imposing on His followers, in their relation to these, different instructions to be literally observed. This drawing of hard and fast lines between classes, this idea that all belonging to one class are to be treated alike, is surely the very antithesis of Christ's method and spirit. Might not the injurious Christian or Jew have his misconduct brought home to him as effectively as the heathen by patient forbearance? Why should he be supposed amenable only to the discipline of rebuke? And why, on the other hand, should the heathen be regarded as incapable of benefiting by remonstrance? Two persons are mentioned in the Gospels whose faith drew forth the wondering admiration of Christ,—the Roman centurion, and the Syro-Phœnician woman.[1] Both were Gentiles. If they possessed a certain exceptional spiritual quality, they might be as

[1] Matt. viii. 10, xv. 28.

conscious that they were acting unjustly in certain cases as any Jew could be, and might be as fittingly subjected to expostulation.[1] It is true that Christ treats the faults of the Jews with a severity which is absent from His attitude to those of the Gentiles. There is a tone of rebuke, and even of indignation in His language to Caiaphas at the final Trial which contrasts strongly with his silence and gentleness before Pilate. But nothing could be more natural than that He should argue and remonstrate with the High Priest in a manner which would have been wholly inappropriate in dealing with one who like Pilate did not know the prophetic history and could not understand the Messianic claims which He affirmed. He proportioned His action to the *individual* with whom He had to do. It was not a question of Jew or Gentile as such, but of personal conduct, and the character of a man's guilt. As, however, the Jews possessed a revelation of God's will unknown to the heathen, they had a heavier moral responsibility and deserved a sterner reprimand. But it is utterly false to contend that Christ held that the generous and forgiving spirit which returns good for evil was not to regulate the action of His disciples towards

[1] The fact that the Centurion was a proselyte does not invalidate the point: it only shows that moral and religious susceptibility was not confined within racial limits, and that men had to be dealt with as individuals, not as members of a class or nation.

them. Professor Seeley maintains that the prayer on the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,"[1] refers only to the Roman soldiers who were unconscious instruments of wrong-doing, and not to the real criminals, the Jewish authorities, whose conduct was deliberate and wilful sin. This interpretation is simply a deduction from his abstract theory, and is imposed upon the passage with nothing either in the text or the context to support it. Whatever the faults of the chief priests or the Jewish people who clamoured for Christ's death, in a deep sense they knew not what they did; knew neither the true character of their act, nor the issues to which it would lead.[2] To empty His intercessory words of a universal reference to the tragedies of human blindness, to deny to Him compassionate thoughts even for the most abandoned sinner, suggests a strange lack of insight that borders upon perversity.

There is but one solution of His contrary injunctions. It lies not in any ingenious hypothesis of separate classes to which they apply, but in the plain recognition that they are not formal rules at all, but principles, both of which have a place in the wise ordering of life. And that place is determined by the circumstances. Un-

[1] Luke xxiii. 34.

[2] Cf. Peter's words to the people: "And now, brethren, I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Acts iii. 17.

complaining endurance of the most grievous injury is at times a Christian duty. Such a temper was eminently needed by the early disciples who were called to carry out the work of evangelisation amid overwhelming opposition. They had often no means of self-defence against their persecutors, who were not open to reasonable argument. But in confronting them with the faith and patience of Jesus Christ, in suffering contumely, torture and death without misgiving and without murmuring, they bore a witness which remained behind to upbraid and appeal. Yet Christ did not mean that this was the only and indispensable course to follow, and that they must take no steps towards self-protection. The instructions which He gave to guide them in dealing with an offender, though perhaps coloured by the reflection of a later time, represent no doubt the real thought of Jesus regarding the legitimacy of correction and discipline. And it is to be noted that the essential idea that pervades them is not so much the punishment of the offender as his reclamation. Every element of revenge is eliminated. *The person who has been wronged is to make the first approaches to reconciliation* by private interview. If he fails, he is not to rest there, as if he had performed a full brotherly part. He is to seek another interview, taking with him one or two witnesses; and then, if need be, to refer the matter to the judg-

ment of the entire Christian community, before he breaks off all further intercourse with the offender.

Such instructions, by calling in an impartial tribunal, compel him to distinguish a real from an imaginary wrong. And in so far as they put in the forefront, not retaliation, but the regaining of a brother from perverseness, they have the same animating motive as underlies the counsel to non-resistance, which Christ enjoins not for itself, but as a means of revealing to the rude and heathenish mind the might and glory of goodness, and of stirring it to a sense of its own misdeeds. But they have another side to them: they show that Christ did not regard passive submission as exhausting all moral obligation towards the wrong and the wrong-doer, that He held there were occasions when it was not only justifiable but dutiful to expose an injury so as to call down upon it public condemnation. Formally, as He expresses them, they concern only relations existing within the Christian circle. But the spirit of them applies to all human relations whatsoever. As within the brotherhood of Christians one has to consider the injury not merely as done to oneself but to the Church, to its character and influence; so the welfare of others, of society as a whole, must be taken into account in determining one's action towards any wrong-doer. Christ's own remonstrance to the

officer of the High Priest was not addressed to him as a Jew, but simply as one who had violated the plainest dictates of fairness, and whose action was a travesty of judicial procedure. To expostulate with an offender, to strive to show him his fault, is not only right as between Christian and Christian but as between man and man; and in both cases, in the event of his final impenitence, it may be right to inflict penalty. Only, as the natural tendency of mankind is to resent wrong, Christ puts the emphasis on forgiveness and forbearance. He declares that bare justice, or the equalising of fault and punishment, is not the principle that should govern human relations; that the prime question is the lessening of the area of wrong by the recovery of the wrongdoer. Therefore He teaches that the magnanimity which declines to defend its invaded rights carries with it an inestimable moral force; that, as Browning has portrayed in his *Instans Tyrannus*, a man may most effectively deprive others of the power of standing against him by refusing to stand against them; and further, that even where punishment may be necessary for the vindication of right and in the interest of the community, it should never be inflicted until every possible means that brotherly kindness can suggest for the reclamation of the offender has been tried in vain. The course which anyone should follow in a specific case of offence depends

on many converging lines. No particular precepts are of any avail. It is obvious both from Christ's teaching and from His own conduct that anyone who turned the injunction regarding passive endurance into an unvarying rule of life, would frequently act contrary to Christ's real intention.

In like manner the maxim, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away,"[1] appears to enjoin indiscriminate charity in our acceptation of the term. It does nothing of the kind. It has to be read in the light of the surroundings to which it referred. Christ had in view those who were destitute of the necessities or elementary comforts of existence, who had no bread to eat, who were faint with thirst, or shivering for lack of clothing; and He forbade His disciples to turn a deaf ear to the appeal of a brother in sore need. His language but repeats, though according to His wont in more vivid and emphatic form, the humane exhortations of the Old Testament.[2] In that age there was no such organised provision made by the community as exists to-day for the homeless or unemployed. If not ministered to by private kindness, their sufferings would have been unrelieved. But every Christian nation now-

[1] Matt. v. 42.

[2] See, *e.g.*, Deut. xv. 7, 8; Ps. xli. 1, cxii. 9; Prov. xix. 17; Isa. lviii. 6, 7.

adays has taken action to protect the outcast and friendless. Partly by legal enactment, partly by social philanthropy, it has done much to prevent the poor from suffering greatly by hunger or exposure, except by their own fault. Therefore there is no parallel in this respect between Christ's time and ours; and a literal obedience to His command would largely defeat its own object. Experience has taught us how truly St. Paul expresses a Christian judgment when he says, "If any will not work, neither let him eat."[1] We see plainly that under our conditions the encouragement of mendicancy is a great social evil, that it degrades far more than it delivers, and that the purpose of our Lord's words is best realised not by impulsive gifts to the unknown passer-by, but by thoughtful and liberal support to organised charitable agencies, or by personal help in cases where we have knowledge of the real need.

And not in this way only: for we have come to recognise that the problem of poverty is but one phase of a many-sided social question, and that it is folly to attempt to solve it without some effort to ascertain and remove its causes. The most appalling destitution may be the result, more or less direct, of unhealthy environment, of overcrowded rooms, of the lust for drink. Again, drunkenness itself may spring from the natural desire for pleasure, for exhilaration, when

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 10.

deprived of other and beneficial means of gratification. This inter-connection and correlation of all social factors is a truth which has been forced upon us, and which we can only disregard at our peril. The immediate relief of the necessitous, even in the wisest and most systematic method, is felt to be but a small instalment towards the discharge of the service we owe to the submerged and disinherited. Hence it is that so much of the best Christian thought and energy of our time is concentrated on the social question in its various aspects. This does not mean indifference to Christ's command, but the earnest resolve *to take it seriously*; to appreciate it at its full value, and carry it through to its real issues. The man, therefore, who in former days would have been content with lavish almsgiving, now frequently devotes himself to temperance reform, to the better housing of the people, to the creation of interests and amusements which may lessen the temptations to vice, because he feels that he is thus ministering to the poor in the most effective way. The newer form of philanthropy costs him more than the old; it makes more demands on his nature; and to restrict himself to the older form would, with his present lights, be a dereliction of his Christian duty. The moral obligation is just what it was: the change is in the data with which it works, in the new conception of society, in the wider know-

ledge of social influences that has grown up in the interval.[1]

Thus Christ's special commands have to be divested of their particular form in order that they may be truly kept amid the ever-changing conditions of life. They have no absolute character: they have to be interpreted in the light of one central principle, of which they are the manifold expression. Passive submission to injury is only noble if it means high-mindedness, unselfishness, faith in the eternal supremacy of goodness. But there is nothing noble about it when it arises from lack of energy or cowardice. A man may be beneath resisting a wrong as well as above it, and he who resents it may be morally better than he who readily submits to it. In the same discourse where Christ enjoins His disciples to "give to him that asketh," He solemnly warns them against the doing of alms that they may have glory of men; they are not to let their left hand know what their right hand doeth. There is a kind of almsgiving which in His eyes is no virtue, but a grave moral fault. It is strange that people should not see that in seeking to extract from the Sermon on the Mount certain formulæ as to particular lines of action, they are turning it to the very purposes which it repudiates. For its essential characteristic from beginning to end is its refusal to attach any

[1] Cf. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, chap. vii.

moral value to acts in themselves, its insistence that the determining element in them is the motive that dictates them, and that forgetfulness of this is the subtlest temptation of human life. *Corruptio optimi pessima.* It teaches that nothing counts if the good heart be absent, and that the secret of the good heart lies in filial fellowship with God. He who knows the Father finds in Him his standard and his inspiration. As God acts to him, he strives to act to others. He receives and partakes in the divine life whose one law is to give its best to all. But that best is no pale abstract universal; it is a definite concrete thing; it takes its shape from the facts with which it has to deal. In one case the best is to *bestow* money or goods; in another, to *refuse* them, lest they should only foster evil habits, and to strive to secure for the sufferer some occupation which will give scope for his energy and help to train him in self-respect. So also in one case the best is to submit to the most grievous wrong without murmuring, to endure in silence as a witness for righteousness; but in another, to rebuke the evil-doer, to confront him with the principles of justice which he has outraged, to endeavour by remonstrance or appeal to awake him to self-reproach and penitence. The highest service we can render may assume the aspect of severity as well as of graciousness. Our Lord's denunciations of the

Scribes and Pharisees were no departure from the filial spirit, but an exemplification of it in a form necessitated by the circumstances. He saw that they caricatured the religion of Israel and turned the truth of God into a lie; that they who were the recognised custodians of the divine revelation of the past for the behoof of the people, robbed the people of their treasure; and therefore, in true love and loyalty to the nation and the nation's faith, He raised His protest in behalf of the disinherited multitudes. Stern reproof was the one method by which He could hope to set forth the fatal misrepresentation of God's redeeming grace which lay at the root of the Pharisaic system. He had not only to think of the Pharisees, who during all His ministry had hardened themselves against His gracious messages, but of the love of God which they had limited and dishonoured, of the weary hearts whom nothing but that love could refresh and strengthen, and of the needs of humanity in the future. Such reproof, coming as it did at the close of His work, was the imperative utterance of a pure, generous, godlike heart. It had nothing of selfish petulance or disappointment in it, but sprang, no less than the cry on the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," from a soul on fire with a divine devotion and a passionate pity for men.

When, indeed, we compare that intercession

for pardon with these reiterated "Woes,"[1] no contrast could externally be greater. Yet the same holy lips spake them both: they were alike the expression of One who lived in, and reflected, the Father. In this centre He dwelt: and from it His life radiated forth, adapting itself to the manifold variety of human condition; sometimes gentle with a surpassing charm, or grave with an exacting demand, or wrapt in a mysterious aloofness. Not uniformity, but diversity, is its outward characteristic. He represses, encourages, warns, upbraids, consoles; flashes out the truth now at one angle, now at another; speaks the word needful for the moment without any qualification, and again utters its complement with an equal emphasis. Hence the apparent contradictions in His sayings are innumerable. As formal utterances, it would be impossible to make out of them an articulated and compact system. Yet they have the profoundest unity at the heart, and their true meaning can never be understood till they are interpreted from within. He did not speak by rule, but according to the dictates of a loving spirit, which read with unerring insight the necessities of the hour.[2]

In order to appreciate the inwardness of His message, one has to bear in mind the Orientalism

[1] Matt. xxiii.

[2] Cf. Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, pp. 77–86 and *passim*.

of its expression. "His teaching," says Dr. Van Dyke, "is neither ancient nor modern, neither Jewish nor Greek. It is universal, enduring, valid for all minds and for all times."[1] Nothing can be truer as respects its content or substance: but it is not so with its form: and it is in no small measure the failure to recognise this which has caused some minds perplexity as to His real thought. They have applied to his fluent and picturesque phrases the canons of Western logic, and pressed them into a significance they were not meant to carry. For Christ's language is fundamentally that of a poet, a mystic; it belongs to literature rather than philosophy, to life rather than to either. Occasionally the heightened and imaginative quality of His utterance is so plain that mistake is hardly possible. "If any man hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children . . . yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."[2] No one who has any rational conception of Christ's character is likely to suppose that He held loyalty to Himself as requiring hatred of one's kith and kin. It hardly needs the parallel passage in Matthew, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,"[3] to explain to us that He is merely insisting on the subordination of all earthly claims of affection to the supreme demand of

[1] *Gospel for an Age of Doubt*, p. 193.
[2] Luke xiv. 26. [3] Matt. x. 37.

discipleship. But the literalistic rendering of these words as given by Luke would be no more grotesque than the exegesis which finds in the command "Give to every one that asketh thee" an invariable rule of almsgiving; or which turns the injunction "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other"[1] into an unvarying rule of submission. In all these instances Christ lays hold of a vital duty, gives it a concrete presentation to feeling and imagination, and states it as a separate imperative. This was His natural method of expression: intense, emotional, unforgetable. He did not utter His message as a contribution to thought, but as a vitalising power in experience. He was not drawing up a code of moral instructions, but arousing men to a diviner life. The different aspects of moral obligation are enunciated with the same absoluteness; but they are all branches of the one tree,—that whole-hearted love of God which bears in it the love of our neighbour. If He places in the forefront the duties of patience, endurance, generosity, forgivingness, that is not because they are the only or exclusive virtues, but because they cut so deep into the evil of selfishness that they are apt to be minimised. He puts the accent on the side which humanity is tempted to neglect.

[1] Luke vi. 30, 29.

II.

From what has been said, it is obvious that it is just as illegitimate to make any single *act* of our Lord a model for our imitation, as to ascribe to any specific *command* of His a universal validity. Speech, indeed, is but a form of action: and some of His commands, such as those imposed on individuals, are, in the most definite sense of the word, acts. Every one perceives that when He said to a sentimental enthusiast, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,"[1] He was speaking thus in view of the man's character; and that to address a similar warning to aspiring disciples indiscriminately would be to misconceive His purpose. As a physician of souls, He suited His prescription to the case; and we caricature His method when we treat the prescription as a panacea. Yet many who admit this law of interpretation in general, are perpetually violating it in particular, and landing themselves in quite needless perplexities. It disturbs them that Christ should have enjoined on the Young Ruler the total abandonment of his riches,[2] as if Christianity were thus committed to a relentless attack on the entire economic fabric of modern civilisation. They see no hope of victory on that line, and are profoundly doubtful

[1] Luke ix. 58. [2] Luke xviii. 22.

whether it is even to be desired. The difficulty is of their own creating. Christ's command had a distinct and special reference to the case before Him. It was relative to His diagnosis of the man's nature, position, and needs, and was not laid upon others, such as Zacchæus, whom yet He welcomed as disciples. Even if it be true—which, however, is not certain—that He imposed the injunction of poverty on all who like the Twelve became His constant followers and accompanied Him on His journeys, and that it was under this category that the Young Ruler was addressed, this still implies the restriction of the command to a limited circle, and for a temporary and specific end. When the personal ministry of our Lord closed, other conditions arose; and it is plain both from the Book of Acts[1] and from the Epistles, that the Apostolic Church did not regard the retention of private wealth as a violation of the highest Christian duty. The apostolic verdict in such a matter is surely of some account; and it wholly accords with all rational exegesis of Christ's own words.

The same principle applies to all the details of our Lord's conduct. They are part of an organism, of the definite rounded whole of His life, and cannot be grasped aright except in relation to Himself, His mission, and the actual

[1] See Acts v. 4.

situation out of which they arose. The fact that He turned the water into wine occupies a prominent place in many modern discussions on total abstinence. One party labours to show that the wine which He created was unfermented. The other grows merry over this as a piece of special pleading, and claims that His conduct proves abstinence to be no Christian duty. Both parties are hopelessly astray, inasmuch as they both proceed on the untenable principle that a particular action of our Lord is to be taken as an unchangeable model for our practice. If Christ made or drank wine in Palestine, that clearly demonstrates that there is nothing inherently evil in the drinking of wine, as such; that total abstinence is not absolutely or in all circumstances obligatory. But it does not in the least imply that we are warranted in drinking wine to-day. What was right for Him placed as He was, may be wrong for us placed as we are. It may well be that the intemperance that prevails around us and the demoralisation that results from it, impose an obligation of self-restraint which did not exist where society was not thus corrupted. The question has to be settled, not by an appeal to precedent, but by the verdict of conscience in full view of the existing situation. The law which Christ lays down as central is that contained in His warning against "despising one of these little ones" or

causing him to stumble,[1] and which St. Paul proclaims with peculiar emphasis, "If meat make my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, lest I make my brother to stumble."[2]

Even this law, indeed, is not to be treated abstractly as a formal instruction. The surrender of our own view or practice only becomes a duty where no counter vital interest is at stake. There are multitudes of cases in which such concession would be disloyalty to truth. The strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please themselves: but this does not mean that they should avoid all causes of offence by adapting themselves to the standard of the weak. All great spiritual movements, like the Reformation, have necessarily involved painful trial and disheartenment to many earnest souls who stood in the old paths. A scientific investigator is obviously not called upon to withhold the results of his discoveries, lest the effect of them should be to shake for a time the Christian faith of a section of the community. Christ Himself by His violation of traditional religious observances must have puzzled and grieved not a few pious Jews.[3] It is inevitable in a world where men are at all stages of intellectual and moral development that much which is rightly said

[1] Matt. xviii. 6, 10. [2] 1 Cor. viii. 13.

[3] Cf. Bousset, *Jesus* ("Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher"), pp. 69, 70.

and done by the thoughtful and the morally robust should confuse and possibly mislead some of their less instructed neighbours. To say that no course of conduct is allowable which creates distress or bewilderment is to put an arrest in every sphere on the progress of humanity. But it is one thing to pursue a line of action at the bidding of a clear and imperative conviction, though it should involve for others temptation or perplexity: it is quite another to subject them to such a trial out of mere selfish assertion of our liberty. And it is the latter which Christ and St. Paul condemn. The Apostle makes this abundantly plain. He is speaking of things that are lawful, permissible to me, within my right as an individual; yet many of these, he adds, are not expedient, since they do not help but hinder my brother's life, and thus become wrong for me as a member of Christ's body, the Church, and as a part of corporate humanity. A Christian fails in his function unless he seeks to do all for "edification."[1] The reformer who strikes out a new path of light for mankind is working for edification: his aim is the highest good, even of those whom he opposes or disturbs. But he who is moved merely by the determination to maintain his rights, and exercises his freedom in this spirit, disregards all considerations of

[1] 1 Cor. x. 23–24; Rom. xv. 2.

edification in his resolve to "please himself." Both of these may be a cause of stumbling to their brethren: but in motive, and real effect on the world, they are apart as the poles.

Yet we have to take heed lest we overstrain this law of edification, and unduly and injuriously limit justifiable interests and activities. It is possible for us to make our conception of what is good for our neighbour so dominant a consideration as to hamper and impoverish the development and expression of our own character. A large place must always be given to the principle of individuality. In matters of ethical as well as physical health what is beneficial to one may be harmful to another. The restraints which ennoble some natures are a source of loss and obstruction to others. If I find that the reading of certain books, or indulgence in certain forms of recreation is a quickening and refreshment, am I to forswear these because my example could not be copied with impunity by everybody? Plainly, that would mean that the feeblest characters and least instructed minds were to "set the pace," that the weak were to become the standard for the strong. *Abusus non tollit usum.* If in revolt from the abuse of any practice which has its root in a genuine natural instinct, I put a ban upon its use, then, even if by such self-repression, or self-mutilation (for in some cases it would come to

that) I helped to ward off temptations from the weak and ill-balanced, what effect would my action have on those of a different and more vigorous type of manhood? Might they not be alienated by the view of duty which I sought to commend as Christian, and which seemed to them, in its outcome, ungenial and untrue to humanity? I may cause men to stumble by my narrowness as well as by my laxity. As it is beyond our power to estimate the influence of our conduct on the diverse characters that surround us, a too eager concern to adapt our course for the benefit of our neighbour will be apt to result in our confining our thoughts to the needs of some particular section to the disregard of others, and thus lessening our real contribution to the increasing good of mankind. Recognising how wide and varied human life is, we shall be most likely to serve men in the fullest measure, not by constituting ourselves judges of what is best for *them*, as if we could estimate the complex bearings of our relation to them, but by resolute fidelity to what is highest in our own nature as known and judged in the personal fellowship of Christ. The impression left upon us by our Lord when we dispassionately study the Gospels, is never that of One who was constantly asking Himself what inferences others might draw from His conduct, but of One who was fearlessly loyal to His own sense of right,

and followed it "in scorn of consequence." His view of the Sabbath; His willingness to associate with those who had forfeited all claim to 'respectability'; His social habits which made possible the sneer that He was "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber," all prove how far removed He was from that timid spirit which is always calculating whether its action may not be capable of erroneous or perverted interpretation.

III.

Perhaps nothing brings out more clearly the utter falsity of supposing that discipleship to Christ implies the reproduction or repetition of the precise lines of action followed by Christ Himself, than the attitude which He consistently assumed to the social wrongs of His time. That He was filled with an intense compassion for human suffering, and counted the relief of it one of the first of moral obligations is obvious on every page of the record. His miracles of healing, His injunctions to almsgiving, His scathing descriptions of the selfishness of the rich, His every word and relation to the hapless and submerged, show the primary place which He gave to the duty of alleviating the lot of the miserable. But His eye was ever fixed on the immediate distress, whether sickness or hunger, and on its removal or mitigation. He did not go beyond it

to its causes.[1] Many of the evils which afflicted His countrymen were directly traceable to the social conditions and political arrangements of the nation. The arrogant treatment of the Jews by the Roman Government, its contempt for their national and religious feelings, its iniquitous fiscal system which made the name of a collector of taxes a byword of loathing, these and countless other social injustices must have stirred His indignation. But He deliberately refused on all occasions the rôle of a political reformer, and evaded the popular enthusiasm which sought to force this upon Him. He took no part in any attempt to abolish legal wrongs and to reconstruct the national polity. His attitude towards the corrupt institutions of His day may be summed up as that of "deep spiritual hostility and of entire political submission."[2] On the face of it, it was a policy of abstention and quietism. And yet the very function which He disowned has been discharged by many in subsequent centuries who have claimed to be His true followers, and whose claim has been acknowledged by the consent of Christendom. Howard in "his circumnavigation of charity," as Burke called it, to

[1] I mean, of course, its *proximate* causes, in the economical or political state of society. The *ultimate* cause, in Christ's view, of all human misery was sin, and that was ever before Him: to deal with it was His supreme mission.

[2] Goldwin Smith, *Does the Bible sanction American Slavery?* p. 97.

lessen the cruelty of the prison laws; Wilberforce toiling during a generation for the abolition of slavery in the British Dominions; Lord Shaftesbury in his labours for the protection of factory women and children, were sustained by the assured conviction that they were carrying out the mind of Christ in reference to the needs of their time. Were they deceived? Is the whole modern Church in error in the war which it wages on unjust laws and institutions? If not, how can we vindicate Christ's refusal to act in a similar manner relative to the evils of His age? No two methods would seem to be more utterly diverse or even contradictory. In what sense can the spirit that animates them be identical?

The explanation is not far to seek; and it shows the futility of fancying that any high morality or spiritual nobleness can be attained by the external copying of good examples.

In the first place, there is no parallel between the political circumstances in which Christ had to fulfil His mission and those of Western Europe to-day. He belonged to a nation which was not self-governing. It was controlled and supervised by an alien authority which conditionally guaranteed to it certain rights, legislative and judicial, but jealously marked every act that could be construed as an encroachment on its own supremacy. The mass of the people were restive under this foreign domination; and there were

ever-repeated outbursts of rebellion. Any attempt at social reform would inevitably have aroused the patriotic instincts of the Jews, and led to a hopeless conflict with the Roman power, which would have found a fresh occasion for tightening its grasp. But where a nation makes its own laws and controls its own destinies, the privileges of citizenship carry new responsibilities. The reformer has an open field for advocating his cause. He has the opportunity of doing a public service, and to refuse to exercise it is to be guilty of a moral dereliction. "The situation of man," as Burke says, "is the preceptor of his duty." The same motives of humanity which urge him in a free and self-governing country to labour for political reconstruction will restrain him from doing so under a tyranny, lest he lure others to destruction in attempting an impracticable task. It is a simple question of adapting means to ends. The spirit that carefully confines itself in one age to personal helpfulness to the oppressed, will in another feel impelled to make every effort to destroy the system which creates or tolerates the oppression.

New circumstances create new moral obligations. Take, for instance, the treatment of slavery in the New Testament. Neither Christ nor His Apostles denounced slavery as abhorrent to God and man, but we do so to-day. While Christ does not directly speak of it at all, the

Apostles are compelled to refer to it on account of the problems which it created in the life of the early Churches. Against slavery as a system they say nothing, but devote all their energies to enforcing truths which, if realised, will undermine it, and on the other hand, to giving such counsels both to masters and slaves as will teach them, even while it continues, to bear themselves as becomes the disciples of Christ. This has been regarded with perplexity by many, as an apparent condonation by the early Church of a huge social evil; while others have rejoined with obvious force, that had Christianity in its initial stages identified itself with any movement, however admirable in the abstract, of political revolution, it would probably have been suppressed, and would at any rate have inevitably created a false impression of its real character. The rejoinder is unquestionably effective: and yet it hardly brings out the inner meaning of the situation. It practically assumes that St. Paul and St. Peter viewed slavery as we view it to-day; which is precisely what they did not. They perceived clearly, indeed, the hateful results that flowed from it, the corruption which irresponsible power wrought in the masters, the cruel injustice inflicted on the slaves, and the vices to which that injustice gave rise; and they could not but see that, in greater or less degree, these were inseparable from the system. But their entire

attitude to the existing organisations of society was profoundly affected by the belief, universally cherished by the Christians of the apostolic age, that the second coming of Christ was near. They did not look for deliverance from social wrongs by the amending of the present mundane order, but by the introduction of a new and regenerated world through the advent of the rightful King. Hence the frequent injunctions in the New Testament to patience and submission under bitter trial, on the ground that "the Lord is at hand." Even, however, if the Apostles *had* anticipated that the earthly life of humanity would be prolonged for centuries, the conditions did not then exist which would have enabled them to conceive the possibility of abolishing slavery. It was interwoven with the whole texture of ancient civilisation. It was the foundation on which social life in every nation rested, and it carried with it an unbroken tradition. No nation, Jewish or Gentile, had imagined that it could be swept away without destroying the fabric of society. Admitted that the Apostles recognised that it was a grievous evil, and one which could find no place in the new social order prophesied and inaugurated by Jesus Christ, it does not at all follow that they must therefore have believed it to be a duty to strive for its removal, any more than for the deliverance of Palestine from Roman interference, which could

not but appear in their eyes disastrous to the religious life of their fellow-countrymen. The one probably seemed to them, as far as the immediate future went, as hopeless a dream as the other. Impenetrable obstacles barred the way. It is perhaps not too much to say that, placed as the Apostles then were, and with their sanity of judgment, the question of agitating for emancipation never occurred to them as a practical matter, or as implying any pressure of obligation. It neither did, nor could, assume an imperative aspect for the conscience till other changes had taken place, involving an alteration in the structure of society, and a different view of human claims and responsibilities. And these lay beyond the horizon of their day. Consequently the line along which duty urged them was not to eliminate a usage which seemed as stable and permanent as the Imperial Throne, but to create in masters and slaves alike the spirit which would render it as little noxious as possible, and to show how, even under it, life might be nobly lived. Only within quite recent times has the moral necessity of labouring for emancipation become a definite conviction. The supersession of the feudal by the industrial system, the awaking of a new conception of the individual in the social organism, the rise and development of representative political government, these and other transformations of thought and habit have combined to produce

the feeling which declares that slavery ought no longer to exist. Not until the right of personal liberty is recognised as a fundamental principle, and the conditions of society are such as to make its embodiment in law and custom practicable, does the Christian conscience pronounce emancipation obligatory. To parallel St. Paul's relation to slavery as an institution with ours to-day is an anachronism. What is for us a duty, was no duty for him at all, nor is it less binding upon us on that account.[1]

But secondly, the final and distinctive ground of Christ's abstention from attacking the political evils of His time lay much deeper than this divergence of outward circumstance; namely, in the *unique vocation appointed to Him.* He came to be the Redeemer of humanity from the thrall of sin, and the Mediator to it of a new divine life, and for this purpose His work was to realise in His own personality the relation of unbroken filial surrender and communion in which man should stand to the Father. The many evils that desolate society have their root in the alienation of man from God, and it was to this that He addressed Himself. So long as it remained, there could be no real cure, but only alleviation. His function was primarily to cure, not merely to alleviate; to convince men that

[1] Cf. Goldwin Smith, *Does the Bible sanction American Slavery?* Section iv.; R. D. Shaw, *Pauline Epistles*, pp. 322–329.

until they welcomed the filial spirit which He possessed and mediated, true happiness, either individual or social, was impossible. It was not assigned to Him to be a pioneer in the intellectual or artistic developments of man's life, which yet in their own way are so important for his welfare. Nor was it His part to amend the faulty social conditions which afflicted His own generation. He had to set aside everything which would obscure the clearness and absoluteness of the essential truth He revealed. To intermeddle with the details of the hour, with contemporary movements of civil reform, even had His age been as favourable for such service as it was notoriously adverse, would have blurred and misrepresented the central purpose of His work. A Christian minister in our own day has often to refrain from identifying himself with some public movement which he heartily approves of, lest through its partisan associations he imperil the definitely spiritual influence which he exists to exercise. Such self-limitation is involved in every wisely ordered life, the repression of the secondary for the sake of the primary. And in Christ's case it was supremely imperative. He was entrusted with a mission, not local or temporal, but universal and permanent. He kept that steadfastly before Him, and would suffer none to tempt Him aside.

But while this is true of His own action, He

was none the less keenly aware of the ultimate significance of His teaching. He knew well that it contained within it the seeds of a hundred revolutions, and that its acceptance would, in the end, more effectively subvert political injustice than any mere political agitation; or rather, that only in so far as the political reform was inspired by His thought, would it really contribute to the abiding welfare of men. He knew that His Gospel would bring into a selfish or corrupt humanity, not peace, but a sword; and that His own achievements in altering the social condition of men, being limited to the sphere of personal helpfulness, would be far transcended by the "greater works" which through His Spirit His disciples in after times would accomplish. He abstained Himself from political action, but He foresaw that ultimately *they* could not do so, that the new life which He imparted to them could not but assert itself in every department of human interest, that by an inherent necessity it must affect and control their whole environment and become a determining factor in the evolution of the race. Their function was different from His. *He* was the Redeemer, *they* the Redeemed. He brought the power which reconciles and regenerates; they were the subjects of the regenerating power; and it was laid upon them to give it due expression in all parts of their being and all relations of their ever-changing corporate life.

IV.

In view of this essential difference of vocation between Christ and His followers, it is obvious that a fallacy frequently underlies the idea that a Christian can best discover his line of duty by asking himself in every experience, What would Jesus do? It is true that such a test, just because it brings him into the presence of the Lord and confronts him with the supreme revelation of God in man, may be of incalculable value in disclosing to him his own faulty character, in compelling him to pass judgment on himself and recalling him to the forsworn or forgotten ideal of his life. The name of Jesus has become the symbol of all that is divinest in humanity, whether in work or suffering; and to conjure it up in earnest thought is to pass into the holy of holies. It hushes the turmoil of contending passions, stirs in us the most sacred memories and ineffable hopes, and breathes into the ear the accents of a higher world. This is the charm which it has in the pages of Thomas à Kempis; its continual recurrence is like the chiming of heavenly bells; it fascinates, solemnises, uplifts. As the image of Jesus rises before us, we become ashamed of what we are, and of our slavish regard for human judgments: we are alone with God, the all-holy and the all-merciful. The very asking of such a question points out the way to the highest.

But this is only so, if the question, "What would Jesus do?" is taken in a fluent general sense as equivalent to, "What is Christ's will for *me*?" No doubt it means this, but it really means much more; namely, that I ascertain what is the right action for me, by *first* determining what *His* action would have been, if He had been placed as I am. This is an erroneous method of arriving at the proper conception of personal duty, for it is an attempt imaginatively to project Christ into my particular circumstances, or in other words to identify Christ with myself. The confusions to which it may lead are manifest. For He came for a specific work which He alone could achieve, in which none other could share—to be the author of eternal salvation. That determined His whole course of action: the things He did, the things He left undone. We see what, as a matter of fact, it meant for Him. He surrendered much which men prize most: from the opening of His ministry He had no fixed home; He remained unbound by the ties of domestic relationships; He engaged in no secular occupation; He took no part, and manifested no interest, in political or national affairs. His entire thought and activity were concentrated on what concerned the moral and religious side of humanity. This is the idea of Him which rises before our minds whenever we picture Him to ourselves: a pure, spiritual personality, apart

from a thousand practical difficulties which we have daily to face. And so when we transport Him into our own time and place, it is always under this conception of Him; and yet we endeavour to fit Him in to *our* surroundings, to impose upon Him our duties, and to subject Him to our temptations. In any age of the world in which He appeared, He would have been the same in spirit, in purpose, in vital message. It is impossible to conceive how He could have pursued a different course from that which He actually followed, in abstaining from the entanglements of earthly business and making everything converge on the one function of the reconciliation of man to God, and yet have left on the heart and conscience of mankind the same impression of what He was as the Redeemer. Thus, as we cannot separate these abstentions from the image we have of Him, and as we cannot find any congruity between that image and many of the engagements and interests which yet seem naturally to belong to us, we conclude that as they would be unsuitable for Him they are equally unsuitable for us as His disciples. It is an honest judgment, sometimes honoured with heroic sincerity and at painful cost; but none the less mistaken for that. For it leaves out of account two salient elements in the problem: the divergence between His environment and ours, and the various aspects of duty which such divergence

creates; and still more, and above all, the unique commission with which He was entrusted, and which made the controlling principle of His life's work altogether different from ours.

It surely requires no argument to show that there are positions in life which Christ's disciples in every age have to occupy, and relations which they sustain to others, which it would be a failure in good taste and a violation of reverence to associate with the Saviour of the world as depicted to us in the Gospels. We instinctively shrink from the thought of anyone who had undertaken the responsibilities of the head of a family, seeking guidance for his course by asking, What would Jesus do in my place? And though the impropriety may not be as glaring, it is quite as real in reference to the varied occupations which go to constitute modern civilisation. What would Jesus do as a workman on a weekly wage; as the manager of a great business; as the editor of a newspaper; as a Member of Parliament? In every such hypothesis there is a fallacy at the root. For each definite sphere of labour makes large demands on one's time and capacity, and involves the absolute concentration of mind and interest for the full discharge of its duties. If a man is to be an industrial manager or an editor, he must live for that end. He has no right to hold such a position unless he resolutely performs its obligations. If Jesus had held it, He would

have answered to every detail of its claims. But how would that have been compatible with His unique mission; with His ceaseless ministration to the spiritual side of humanity to which He subordinated everything? Christ's function was as definite and distinct as any entrusted to man. It had its conditions, its imperious necessities, its limitations, like any other allotted sphere of service. When we ascribe to Him an additional function, and ask how He would have combined the two, we are putting an impossible question. In the Gospels He moves in the region of purely religious activities, and we have no right to indulge our fancy by picturing Him in situations from which He consistently held aloof, or by attributing to Him solutions of practical problems which He was not called to face.

The inevitable consequence of doing so is not to illuminate but to obscure our own duty. Confessedly, our purpose is to discover what loyalty to Christ involves for *us*, being what we are, with a work of our own which has to be done, in a specific environment of affections, relations, claims. To attempt to conceive how He would act in such an environment is to alter the issue. For wherever He comes, He comes as Himself, the incarnate Son, charged with a quite other work than ours which it was His one mission to realise. Very much that we do with a clear conscience, and that we must do if we are to

retain our place worthily in modern conditions of society, will then naturally become to us trivial, doubtful, or even wrong. We cannot easily associate Him with our amusements and recreations; and even the absorbed pursuit of some secular employment for hours every day will appear a waste or misapplication of our time and power, a withdrawal of them from the direct religious service which is their proper use.[1] It may seem strange that this feeling should arise when we know that Jesus in His years of seclusion in Nazareth laboured as a carpenter.[2] But when we speak of what He would do, it is the Jesus of the ministry whom we think of, the public teacher who went about preaching the Gospel of the kingdom and ministering to the sick. He was then no more to be found at the carpenter's bench, simply because such occupation did not blend with the new function which He assumed. Nor will a vast number of our activities and engagements blend with His personality as the preacher and Saviour. But this no more proves them wrong for us than it was wrong for Him in His time of seclusion to live a working man's life.

When we set up this fallacious standard before ourselves, we do a grave injustice to Christ Him-

[1] The result is that in many a complicated question of duty we land ourselves in those rash "off-hand" judgments of what is right which Canon Moberly justly deprecates. See his *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 307–309.

[2] Mark vi. 3.

self. By ruling out as at least questionable all the parts of our conduct which do not blend with His redeeming function, we identify Christianity with the disparagement of large tracts of legitimate human action and enterprise; we make it antagonistic to some deep and essential instincts of humanity, and turn it into an over-strained asceticism. There could be no greater contradiction either of the character of Christ's own example or the nature of His mission. His own life was marked by the most intense self-dedication to spiritual ends. The ordinary ties of relationship, the ordinary forms of labour and pleasure which play such a part in the experience of men as a whole, were as nothing to Him personally. He held on His way, surrendered and self-restrained, towards the appointed goal. Yet with all this severity of consecration, He was not an ascetic. He had a healthy objectivity of outlook, dwelling with keen observation and appreciative insight on nature and man, on the beauty of bird and flower, on the varieties of human interest and occupation as belonging to God's intended order and a means of divine revelation. And so, while He called all men to follow Him in His cross-bearing, He never laid it down as a universal condition of discipleship, whatever He may have done in particular instances, that they should imitate His detached manner of life. On the contrary, He showed quick sympathy with the

special difficulties and trials incidental to their lot and calling, and was only anxious that they should find in these a discipline from God. The common earth, the things of every day, had an infinite attraction and significance for Him.[1] And it was this friendly and genial temper which contrasted Him so strongly in the minds of the people with John the Baptist, and constituted the strange charm of His personality. They were astonished that One for whom the service of God was all in all, was indifferent to nothing that concerned them, and taught that this service was possible for them, and incumbent on them, as they were and where they were. Nevertheless, when we ask what Christ would do in our place, we too readily overlook this sympathetic relation to the diverse conditions of men, and restrict our view of Him to His *personal* abstention and renunciation.

And it is not only His example which is thus misconceived, but His real mission. The Gospel which He declared and embodied was not particularist, but universal. It was not meant for the Jew as Jew, but for the Jew as man; it was the satisfaction of the essential need of humanity, and was to be preached among all nations. But these nations were divided from each other as they were from the Jews by racial characteristics, by intellectual, social and political divergences. The Gospel had not created these differences; it

[1] Cf. Bousset, *op. cit.* pp. 13, 14.

could not erase them; for they had their roots deep in the nature of man. But it claimed that it alone provided the regulating and inspiring power which would make them subserve the highest welfare of humanity. That was its fundamental assumption. Yet when originally proclaimed, it was addressed to Jews, and largely took the shape which was adapted to the Jewish society of the time, to its form of thought and its practical problems. But life has other aspects with which the Gospel was not then called to deal. Even the New Testament itself contains the proof of this. When we pass from the sayings of our Lord to the Epistle to the Romans or the Epistle to the Colossians, we are conscious of a profound contrast. The intellectual or speculative element has entered in. It has become necessary to give to the spiritual truth a systematic form; to show its reasonableness, its self-consistency. And this tendency could not be arrested. The doctrinal discussions of the subsequent three or four centuries were not arbitrary disputes which it was in the power of the Church to decline. Many of the questions raised had no precedent in St. Paul's teaching, still less in that of our Lord; they belonged to a new situation which Christian faith had to face. We simply cannot imagine Christ concerning Himself after the manner of the Early Councils with the problem of the two natures, and the right conception of their union in one

personality. But if Athanasius or any of his successors had asked what the Master would have done in his place, he would as likely as not have dimmed his vision of the duty that lay before him.

The history of humanity, if it shows anything, shows the gradual arousing of dormant powers, the creation of fresh interests, the opening up of unimagined spheres of service. The work of the artist or the scientific investigator seems on the surface far enough away from the type of life depicted in the New Testament; yet it is determined for him by his gifts and opportunities, which carry with them their own responsibilities. And just as on the intellectual side humanity has moved out in directions once undreamt of, so on its practical and social side it has exhibited an ever-increasing complexity. Modern industry and commerce, which have so completely transformed the environment of man's life, have brought in their train innumerable evils which are a burden to the Christian conscience; yet in their main characteristics they have developed along lines which were unavoidable. The rise of the scientific spirit, the discoveries and inventions to which it has led, the widening intercourse of the nations, the spread of liberty in thought and action, these were all latent in human nature, and were bound sooner or later to produce some such diversified social conditions as civilisation now presents.

To speak as if Christianity were antagonistic to the marvellous differentiation of interests and employments which marks a modern community, is grossly to caricature it. It is to declare it unequal to deal with the needs of any but a primitive and undeveloped society. But Christianity is not a particular form of human activity and thus in rivalry with others. It is the consecration of all; and welcomes every expansion of man's capacity and energy as disclosing a fresh field for its operation. Christ touches humanity at a point behind and beneath its divergences: He deals with what is central to man as an individual soul, because He is the perfect embodiment of the Father's reconciling love, and the mediator of the filial spirit in which alone any man finds God and attains to harmony with himself. But by thus ministering to the central being of man, He claims to control all the diverse powers that radiate from it, and that slowly manifest themselves in the course of history.[1]

Therefore, a Christian's vocation is not to play the part of Providence to himself, but to accept the lot appointed, and make his own life as shaped for him by his qualities and his surroundings a dedicated service to the Father. *Spartam nactus es: hanc exorna.* The words of the Apostle, applied with a more limited

[1] Cf. F. Paget, *Studies in the Christian Character*, Introd. Essay, pp. 28–31.

reference, "Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God,"[1] set forth the divine significance of the circumstances in which the call of God comes to us. When St. Paul was arrested by the voice on the way to Damascus, his irrepressible cry for guidance was, Lord, what wilt Thou have *me* to do?[2] Neither he nor the other Apostles would have dreamt of solving a perplexity by taking upon themselves to pronounce what Jesus Himself would have done in a particular conjuncture of events. Their sense of the gulf that separated Him from them, and of their utter incapacity, as erring, sinful men, to project themselves into the standpoint of the Holy One and to see with His undimmed vision, would have instinctively restrained them. To them He was no more Jesus of Nazareth, but the reigning Lord who from His throne directed the destinies of His Church in the fulfilment of its world-wide mission. From the day on which He ascended, a new era had begun, with new conditions and new problems, for which they found the needed light and help through communion with Him in

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 24.

[2] Acts ix. 6. These words of the Textus Receptus are, as is well known, a later insertion, and may be an adaptation from Acts xxii. 10, "What shall I do, Lord?" The meaning in both cases is the same; but the first form of expression brings out more clearly what I am here dealing with, the right method of discovering our personal duty.

the Spirit. They did not presume to judge for Him, but they believed with all their hearts that they could know His judgment on them. For in this they were not indulging a freakish imagination, but dealing with what was measurable, practical, within actual experience.

It was this conviction that they were not left to gather their course of action simply from deductions drawn even from Christ's example, that the past had in a true sense been transcended, and that they were under the inspiration of a living Leader who was never taken by surprise, which gave to the Apostles their fearless confidence in difficult or novel situations. No one can read the Acts of the Apostles without being impressed by the free and spacious atmosphere that pervades the apostolic period, as of men who had indeed overcome the world,—for whom the future had no terrors, and who hailed every crisis as a fresh opportunity of triumph. They have to pass verdicts on the most delicate and vital questions; on the relation of Jew and Gentile; on the recognition of varied orders of gifts and service in the Church; on the obligation of civil obedience. They do it without hesitancy, as those who are not only conscious of their right to speak, but are assured that the highest wisdom speaks through them. They never ask for precedents. Nothing they do is stereotyped; all is fresh, independent, original.

It may be frankly admitted that the Spirit was conferred upon them in an exceptional measure, and that their inspiration differed in degree and certainty from what is vouchsafed to us. But that does not alter the fact that our Christian life must be typically the same as theirs. It cannot be that they were endowed with the liberty of a divine fellowship which is denied to us; that the first disciples were called to walk by an inward light, while we have to discover our duty by referring to rules and precedents. If it were so, we should still be in bondage. We should stand bewildered at every turn for lack of some definite instruction or parallel case to guide us. Our Christian service would be a weak, restricted, diffident thing: and have upon it the curse of formality which is the mother of hypocrisy. If it is to have the apostolic courage, inexhaustibleness, adaptation to varying necessities and adequacy to sudden emergencies, it must have at the heart of it apostolic liberty and vision.

But this freedom of service which is the prerogative of every disciple of Christ, is the very reverse of arbitrariness. He acts according to the new life which has become his true self, and which is in him, not of him. For to him Christ is *Der Einzige*, the only possessor of the filial spirit, the only source of it in others. He returns to the Gospels, not to find detailed direc-

tion or warrant in some word or act of Christ, but to gain through all the words and acts the impress of the Personality behind them and drink in the spirit of His life: not that he may imitate a departed Leader, but that he may rightly conceive that living Lord whose instrument and organ he is. It is thus as a surrendered soul that he takes his place among men, knowing that he can only be loyal to God if he is loyal to himself and the sphere appointed him. He feels no anxiety to accord his ways with those of others, and is not afraid to act alone or to strike out into untrodden paths. The one necessity for him is that he should be conscious of fidelity at every stage to the authority of the Christ-life which reveals itself to him ever more fully as he follows on to obey it. Hence while his action is spontaneous it has nothing of self-will in it, for it is governed by that law of the spirit of life whose source and norm is the Lord Himself.

And as he does not allow others to judge for him, so he refrains from judging others. The reverence which he cherishes for his own individuality leads him to reverence theirs. Having been divinely led by a way of his own, he has a deep faith in the manifoldness of Christ's service, and in "the varieties of untried being" through which humanity must pass ere it reach its goal.

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY ON CORPORATE DUTY; OR, CHRISTIANITY AND THE STATE.

THERE are few more difficult questions than the application of Christ's authority to the State. It has been already pointed out that He consistently refrained from attacking and denouncing the political evils of His time. The same abstention was practised by the Apostles; and for very much the same reasons. In the first place, Christ's unique function was to be the revelation and embodiment of that reconciling grace of God which is the one secret of individual or social good. To assail the particular abuses of society as if they could be treated separately, and to propound practical suggestions for their removal, would have impaired the witness which He bore to what was vital, ultimate, indispensable. He came to deal not with evil customs but with sins, and not primarily with sins as acts, but with *sin* as a principle in the soul. And a similar limitation, though in a subordinate way, was imposed on the Apostles.

Their function was to preach that Gospel of which Christ was the centre, to proclaim it as the power of God unto salvation, as the only healer of the deep wounds of humanity, and to define for all future generations its real character and content. They, too, had to take precaution lest it should be imagined that any cure short of this would avail in any specific case. The good which they could have done by the advocacy of some social reform would have been far more than counterbalanced by the withdrawal of men's thoughts from the Christian message which alone held the key of all problems. Further, for them, as for Christ, the political conditions under which they lived made all attempts at organic change impossible. They were subject to an autocratic rule which brooked no interference, and which watched with jealous eyes every movement which could be construed as an attack on its prerogatives. Cautious as they were, they could not at times escape the charge of being disturbers of the peace. Consequently they felt themselves quite helpless in presence of abuses against which their whole being protested, but which seemed to them involved in the very structure of society as then organised, and only likely to disappear when the coming of the Lord would close the present "æon."

But the relation in which a Christian stands to-day to questions of political amelioration is

entirely different. For where the people are self-governing, and have the power by their personal influence and their votes to amend the laws and introduce an improved social order, they cannot divest themselves of the moral responsibilities which their position entails. *To refrain from taking action* in the instance of a manifest wrong is *to act*; it is to endorse and perpetuate the wrong. This is the verdict of conscience, inherent in man by nature, altogether apart from Christianity. When Christianity enters in, it does not impair but intensify it. The religious quietist who deliberately refuses to exercise a political right belonging to him, because it concerns a sphere not purely spiritual, neglects a primary duty, and renders religion practically nugatory. The same Christian faith which sharpens a man's ethical insight into the defects of society lays upon him the obligation of working for their removal. His capacity of contributing to this end may in itself be slight, and the accidents of his situation may further limit its exercise, but his Christianity requires him to sympathise with the cause and aid it as he may have opportunity.

I.

No difficulty exists in harmonising such an attitude with that of the Apostles, in so far as the efforts to usher in a happier society are confined

to moral or spiritual appeal and the influence of personal example. The denunciation of general usages which are hurtful to the community, and the organising of a propaganda for bearing home to the mind and conscience of the people the duty of personally discontinuing them, are simply applications, under new conditions of political freedom, of the same methods which St. Peter and St. Paul employed. In both cases the endeavour is made to win men to a nobler life by convincing their reason, or by addressing their fears, their hopes, their sense of right. In neither case is there any external compulsion; they are left free to shape their own course. And this liberty of self-determination is an essential note of Christ's own teaching: every disciple must be a willing disciple: he enters the kingdom because he freely responds to the divine message. This inward consent is the first and indispensable requirement: without it, a regulated conduct, however formally correct, has no value in Christ's eyes. But the reform of society inevitably involves compulsion, sooner or later. For if we take any social evil or injustice whatever, we find that though it may not be created by the existing laws of the country, it is largely affected by them. They operate either in the way of its increase or its repression. Very frequently, as in the case of intemperance, the solution of the problem has to be sought quite as much in indirect as in direct

lines, and includes all that influences the health and recreation of the community. Sometimes bad legislation in regard to land or corn is, if not the "fons et origo mali," yet a dominant contributory cause of social distress; so that it would be completely futile to seek any permanent cure except by altering the law.

Here lies the crux of the problem of Church and State, or, if we prefer, of the Christian religion and the State. The methods of the two are diametrically opposite. The former claims a voluntary obedience, and can be satisfied with nothing else; it leaves the decision with the man himself. The latter compels obedience, asks no questions as to the motive, is content so long as the man keeps his action within the limits it prescribes. Yet the Christian feels bound by conscience to strive to embody in the statute-book, and thus to make obligatory for others who may differ from him, conceptions regarding the social relations of the people which have come to him only from his Christianity. He starts from a religion of freedom and inwardness, and he employs the truth to which it leads to abridge the freedom of his neighbour by means of positive or prohibitory enactments. And he does this not in spite of his Christianity, but, as he believes, under its impelling power. It seems a paradox, and at first sight hard to reconcile with the example and spirit of the Master Himself.

There are those who have argued that Christ's fundamental view of human conduct as rightly determined only from within implies His antagonism to all compulsory government as represented in an earthly State. They not only hold, what is obviously true, that His *ideal* of society is one in which men instinctively act from the highest motives, from which arbitrary self-will disappears, because all live under the constraint of a common inner law acknowledged to be supreme and imperative, and freedom is one with service; but they contend that this ideal was meant by Him to be the exclusive ruling principle of our present life, and that He expected all who were His disciples to make it so in their own case and to regard the introduction of force for the regulation of society as illegitimate. His own abstention from political interests is adduced as a proof of His condemnation of external control. It was in accordance with this conviction, it is argued, that He refrained from opposing the civil authority though He deemed it oppressive or unjust. He would not use force even to compass a good end. He submitted in silence to the laws imposed, simply from the necessity of His position, not at all because He regarded them as having a moral claim to obedience.

It is hardly needful to say that this conception of Christ as a spiritual visionary, blind to the actualities of the world, has no support in the

Gospels. It shows an utter misappreciation of those two salient elements in any estimate of His life which have been already dwelt upon—His function, and His political environment. But further, it is exegetically false: for though there are few sayings of our Lord bearing on the authority of the State, yet these few fairly interpreted are the very contrary of anti-governmental in their spirit. When "one of the multitude" appealed to Him to secure him his proper share of the family inheritance, Jesus said, "Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?"[1] He disclaims such intervention as no part of His mission. *He* is not a judge: let recourse be had to those who *are* judges. His domain is the spiritual, and therefore He proceeds to enforce the peril of covetousness. There is no hint of any disapproval of the civil law in its own sphere. Had He counted it wrong in all circumstances to resort for redress to a formal or legal authority, His answer would have taken a different shape. It would not simply have disowned *His* right to interfere, but would have denied that any such right existed. What He does is to emphasise the motives that should govern every action. Again, His pronouncement on the Tribute-money, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's,"[2] points in the same direction. Doubtless it was

[1] Luke xii. 14. [2] Matt. xxii. 21.

an *argumentum ad hominem*, to avoid the trap which was laid for Him. He answers the general question by a reference to a concrete instance. By using Cæsar's coin the Jews recognised Cæsar's supremacy, and as they accepted the convenience which His government procured for them, they were bound to make some return of service.[1] But the stress of His reply lies on the final phrase, "to God the things that are God's." The *form* of the expression suggests two equally legitimate authorities, one human and one divine, ruling in independent and mutually exclusive spheres. This is not at all Christ's meaning, and would be a contradiction of His fundamental conception of man as a debtor in all things to God and in all things His servant. He held the universal claim of God to man's allegiance in every sphere of his activity. But had He affirmed it in this connection, it would have been misconstrued by the Pharisees who lay in wait for Him, as a repudiation of the foreign dominion of Rome, and as a plea for the restoration of the theocratic kingdom of Israel. Therefore He treats the two realms as distinct, which they were in essential characteristics, leaving it to be inferred that there was no incompatibility between them, inasmuch as he who truly belonged to the heavenly kingdom was for that reason the most loyal in discharging all the duties that were in-

[1] *Vide* Shailer Mathews, *Social Teaching of Jesus*, p. 117.

cumbent on him as a citizen of the earthly. When we take account of the difficulty in which Jesus was placed by the captiousness of His opponents, it is hard to see how He could more plainly have conveyed His conviction of the supremacy of the divine over all life, and yet of the legitimacy of the subordinate and sectional authority of the earthly ruler, as according to God's will and deserving of obedience for God's sake.

This interpretation of a somewhat enigmatical saying is confirmed by His reply to Pilate's assertion of his power to crucify or to release Him, "Thou wouldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above";[1] an explicit declaration that the Procurator's title to dispose of Him judicially was no unwarrantable assumption, that it pertained to him in the Providential order of the world, but that for this very reason it was a delegated right, and had to be exercised in loyalty to the source from which it came. The full weight of this utterance is not appreciated unless we remember that Christ as a patriotic Jew shared the abhorrence felt by His fellow-countrymen to the Roman domination. From the abstract or ideal point of view it was a gross injustice that the Gentile should coerce the "chosen people." But He saw in this humiliating thraldom the act of God

[1] John xix. 11.

who had permitted the Jews to be deprived of independence in punishment for their unfaithfulness to their mission. That Christ should thus have recognised Pilate's claim on behalf of an alien and in many respects oppressive rule, is a sure proof that against government as such He waged no war, and that it had for Him its basis and vindication in the nature of humanity as made by God. On the other hand, His words give no vestige of support to the idea of the duty of passive submission to civil cruelty and wrong; they carry an exactly opposite significance. By tracing back all civil authority to a divine origin, they proclaim the standard by which it must be tried: a standard which, being divine, is perceived or may be perceived by subjects as well as by their ruler, and so lays upon them, as well as upon him, the obligation of striving for its realisation. Nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that Christ held that the power of a magistrate was derived "from above," and was therefore bound to accord itself with the divine purposes for which it was given, and yet that He ascribed to the magistrate the sole title to judge whether it was being so used or not; as if those whose life and welfare were at stake were mere pawns in his hand. This would be to attribute to Him a hopeless inconsistency. For the presupposition of His Gospel is that every man may ascertain God's will, if

he choose; nay, that he is under an imperative call to strive after this knowledge, and that no one can relieve him of the responsibility. If, then, he perceives that the power of the civil ruler is not fulfilling the divine intention, but is being perverted to subserve selfish ends and has become the minister of unrighteousness, there is no abstract moral necessity compelling him to remain silent or inactive in presence of the injustice. The moral necessity is all the other way. He ought to bear his own share of the task of amending the evil, and securing an upright government. What that share is will depend upon circumstances. How far and at what time a people is justified in resisting a monarch's will, and what form its resistance should take, are concrete questions which can only be answered in view of the actual situation. Differences of opinion on such points will exist even among the most loyal, religious, and instructed citizens. But there can be no difference of opinion among those who believe with Christ that civil authority is given "from above," regarding the right of the subject as well as the magistrate to form his own judgment on the degree in which the civil authority discharges its appointed function, and to act upon this judgment by the employment of all available and legitimate means.

Neither our Lord nor His Apostles had any occasion for enforcing this latter side of the

subject's duty. The spiritual character of their message, the overwhelming and autocratic power of Rome, its jealousy of all political interference, and the ever-recurrent tendency of the Jews to break out into futile rebellion, all made it necessary for both, when treating directly of the function of earthly government, to dwell on the fact that its authority was lawful, rather than on the fact that it was subordinate and delegated. The latter truth with all that it implied as to civil resistance could not, without misconstruction, be put in the forefront, yet it was inherently involved in the first principles of the Gospel.

It cannot be imagined that the Apostles in this matter failed to reflect the thought of the Master; and they speak with no uncertain voice. They set forth obedience to constituted authority, whether of kings or of governors, as an imperative obligation for Christians. St. Peter terms the State the ordinance of man, to which Christians are to submit for the Lord's sake:[1] St. Paul calls it definitely the ordinance of God.[2] The expression varies, but the meaning is the same, that civil government, though the creation of man, rests upon a divine foundation, and that this constitutes its final claim to allegiance. Indeed, so emphatic and absolute is St. Paul's statement on the subject[3] that it seems to overleap itself, and give rise to a difficulty of a

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 13. [2] Rom. xiii. 2. [3] Rom. xiii. 1–7.

precisely opposite kind. His language, by its apparently unconditional identification of the human and divine in the authority of the State, at first sight appears to afford colour and support to the debasing doctrine of passive submission to any and every ruler and type of rule, and has been quoted a hundred times to buttress the most odious tyranny. But such a rendering is a clear misreading of the Apostle's words. He is not writing a treatise on Church and State, or contemplating the various problems that arise in particular conjunctures of events.[1] He is speaking as a moralist on a great question of duty, regarding it in some sense abstractly, and concerned only to make the ultimate principle clear. The State, as he describes it, is not any actual institution: it is the ideal State, the State as it would be if it fulfilled its true end as the ordinance of God. "Rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good." That is the picture of a normal government wholly just and beneficent, as it has floated before the imagination of reformer and saint: in its com-

[1] H. J. Holtzmann, *Neutest. Theol.* ii. 159: "Alle Vermittelungen mit der Wirklichkeit und der Behandlung der daraus sich ergebenden Collisionsfälle, insonderheit die casuistischen Fragen nach dem Verhalten in Uebergangszeiten, Krisen und Katastrophen bleiben ausser Betracht; gerade wie in der Bergpredigt."

pleteness it never has existed, and perhaps never will exist, on earth. The history of Europe, during its ages of Christian profession, with their Albigensian crusades, their Spanish Inquisitions, their massacres of St. Bartholomew, their nameless and innumerable atrocities perpetrated by the civil power, is the bitterest of ironical comments on St. Paul's words.[1]

But it may be asked, Was the Apostle not speaking in view of a definite situation? Was not his motive to enjoin civil obedience to the laws of the Empire? If so, how can it be said that he was depicting an ideal? And yet the two things are not at all incompatible. His immediate purpose was unquestionably to restrain the Christians from any insubordination to the Roman authority. He had manifest reasons for fearing that this might occur. There were many Jews in Rome, some of them members of the Christian Church; and there was an ever-recurrent tendency in the Jewish population to revolt from Gentile rule as an invasion of their theocratic rights. Even Gentile believers were apt

1 "Earth is sick,
And Heaven is weary, of the hollow words
Which States and Kingdoms utter when they talk
Of truth and justice."

The Excursion, v.

"The history of nations," said Mr. Gladstone, "is a melancholy chapter; that is, the history of governments is one of the most immoral parts of human history." Morley's *Life*, iii. 539.

to consider the kingship of Christ as superseding and dispossessing all earthly claims to loyalty. St. Paul saw that the results of rebellion in the actual position of matters would be evil and only evil. Those who rebelled would be simply cut down; they would be dashing themselves against impenetrable bars. Their action, too, would compromise the Christian cause, by identifying it with political movements; and would misrepresent its character to the world. Moreover, the Imperial rule was in many ways a blessing to mankind: it secured social order; by virtue of it Christian preaching had a comparatively free scope, and the Apostle, as a Roman citizen, had occasion once and again to appeal to it for protection from Jewish or Gentile violence.[1] Were it to be undermined, no other power seemed likely to arise capable of taking its place: it was the one bulwark, so far as man could judge, against sheer anarchy. There is no cause for surprise if St. Paul were extremely eager that nothing should be done by Christians which would place them in antagonism to it, seeing that all considerations drawn from the welfare of society and from the progress of Christianity alike forbade such action. But quite naturally, in a matter of so great moment and requiring no little delicacy of handling, he does not argue the question on details, he falls back

[1] Acts xvi. 37–39; xxii. 25–29.

on principles, brings out the real and ultimate character of the State in itself, the final cause of its existence among men, the ends for which it has been instituted and the awful sanctions that lie behind it. Hence while his eye is in a manner never withdrawn from the immediate problem of Rome's supremacy, he treats it in the light of the ideal relation of the ruler to the subject. His one aim is to insist on the permanent place which Government has in the Providential order, and the duty of the followers of Christ to acknowledge this in word and deed. The emergency which he sought to meet gave him no occasion to inquire whether civil obedience has its limits. The circumstances which alone could make the question practical and pressing had not yet arisen.

Consequently, it is an anachronism to seek guidance from his words as to the Christian lawfulness of resistance to a ruler under *constitutional* government.[1] They throw no light, for example, on the moral merits of the two parties either in our own Civil War in Charles the First's time, or in the revolt of the American Colonies from Great Britain. They were meant to bear upon a particular political condition in which

[1] The protest of Peter and the other Apostles before the Sanhedrin, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29), shows that where any human authority seeks to suppress Christian truth it may be the duty of Christians to disobey its behests and to suffer. But this is a different question from that of active resistance and rebellion in an organised form.

submission was of paramount importance, and in which forgetfulness of the divine mission of the State was a perilous temptation. But in the course of history and the gradual evolution of society wholly different conditions are inevitably created, which bring to the front other aspects of Christian duty. When a national constitution has been established under which the people have definite legal rights, new responsibilities devolve upon them. They have a great deal more to do with the laws than simply to obey them. The very fact that they are entrusted with a share in making them changes the moral situation. If it is right at all for them to take any part in the shaping of legislation, then they are bound to strive to shape it according to their highest lights. There are but two alternatives: either they should abstain altogether from political action, or that action ought to be the expression of their best thought, *so far as* that can be expressed in the realisation of the proper function of the State.

II.

So far, but only so far: for every corporate body has a characteristic function. It exists to fulfil certain ends which are more or less definite, and is therefore limited in its sphere of operation. If it oversteps its own area and seeks to further

other ends, however intrinsically valuable, than those which it was formed to subserve, it will probably end in disaster. By endeavouring to compass a secondary purpose which does not belong to it as a corporation, it will almost certainly fail of the primary design of its institution. Macaulay has put this point with his wonted emphasis and lucidity. "It is of much more importance that the knowledge of religious truth should be wisely diffused than that the art of sculpture should flourish among us. Yet it by no means follows that the Royal Academy ought to unite with its present functions those of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, to distribute theological tracts, to send forth missionaries, turn out Nollekens for being a Catholic, Bacon for being a Methodist, and Flaxman for being a Swedenborgian. For the effect of such folly would be that we should have the worst possible Academy of Arts and the worst possible Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge."[1] A broad distinction exists between what is incumbent on a man as an individual and what is incumbent on him as a member of a body which has been created for a definite and specialised object. An artist who is a Christian is bound to labour at his art in the spirit and with the motives of a Christian. But he is under no obligation to abstain from joining an association for the further-

[1] *Essays*, "Gladstone on Church and State."

ance of art unless all the other associates share his faith in Christ, or if he belongs to such an association to strive to shape its rules and policy so as to foster that faith. Were he to act on this principle, art would suffer, and Christianity would not gain, but become discredited for its intolerance and ineptitude.

It is not difficult to draw the line that separates individual from corporate duty, where the corporation is of this well-defined character. No one would argue that because a man's Christianity should govern his entire life he ought to employ his influence as a director of a Gas Company or an Insurance Society to turn it into a religious missionary agency. But though the same rule applies in a measure to the State, it is much more complex in its application.

For the State has no such clearly defined and restricted function as pertains to an association founded for a single and well-understood purpose. A Gas Company, to which Macaulay falsely compares it, consists of those who voluntarily accept membership in it, and who do so with a distinct comprehension of its aim. But men are born into a State, grow up in it, are compelled to obey its laws, and in all ordinary circumstances live out their life under the conditions which it determines. Even if they expatriate themselves, they only become subjects of another State, which equally moulds their environment. There-

fore they cannot escape from national authority, as they can withdraw from a commercial Company at pleasure. But, what is still more important, and closely connected with this inevitableness of the State, its action has an immeasurable and pervasive effect on the whole of life. Its elementary function is no doubt to protect life and property, to afford to the individual security in the pursuit of his calling, and to resist attack or aggression upon the nation by any foreign power. But if it is to discharge this, it clearly cannot confine itself to the punishment of the grosser evils, such as murder or theft, that lay waste society. For even where these evils are absent, the strength and vitality of the community may be sapped in a hundred other ways. The very freedom which the State exists to guarantee to all its subjects may be so used by some as to constitute an infraction of the freedom of others. Therefore the State has to intervene to guard the interests of those who, if utterly left to themselves, would be driven to the wall. Hence it passes restrictive regulations relating to land, to factories, to mines, to housing, to sanitation. It interposes in self-defence, and in fulfilment of its own proper work of protecting life. But the word "life" receives an ever wider interpretation, in accordance with the increase of knowledge and the quickening of the moral sense. As the social organism develops, the interdependence of its various parts

becomes more accentuated. It is recognised that the nation cannot prosper when any section of the community is harassed or hampered by its environment in the exercise of its gifts.

Thus the action of the State necessarily passes from the function of a mere protector to that of a fosterer of the best life of the community. It no longer restricts itself to warding off dangers which interfere with the individual's right to act as a free man: it seeks to create influences and conditions which will enrich his life and make it more serviceable to the commonwealth. It promulgates a definite standard of education, and makes it compulsory for all children born within its borders. It encourages art and science, not simply for utilitarian ends, but as contributing to the higher intellectual interests and to the elevation and refinement of the people. In short, it has completely abandoned the *laissez faire* conception of government, partly because it finds that unrestricted liberty has resulted in new perils to the well-being of society which only a national authority can avert or minimise, and partly because of a heightened consciousness of social responsibility.

This expansion of function is not due to the arbitrary assumption by the State of duties outside its own province, but to its deepening realisation of what that province includes. Aristotle's assertion that "if the State is formed to

make life possible, it exists to make life good,"[1] has an abiding truth in it, though it is deeply coloured by the ancient Greek idea that the individual was absorbed in the community and had really no meaning apart from it. We can only adopt his phrase in a modified sense.[2] Yet while the State cannot be said to exist to make men good, it exists to create the conditions and influences which make it easier for them to *become* good, which call forth their powers and give them the opportunity of acquiring a noble and dignified character. Therefore it will ever extend its authority in fresh directions, just in proportion as the moral feeling of the people grows in strength and delicacy.

And among the factors that have fed this growth in ethical sensitiveness far the greatest is Christianity. The conceptions of justice and humanity which have gradually transformed the Statute-book have had their chief origin in Christian belief. If religion means anything to a man, it must dominate all his activities. No sphere of his energy can be separated from its influence and labelled secular. If he is a member of a corporate body, he must carry into its service his total personality,—mind, heart, conscience. But

[1] γιγνομένη μὲν τοῦ ζῆν ἕνεκεν, οὖσα δὲ τοῦ εὖ ζῆν. *Politics*, I. ii. 8.

[2] In justice to Aristotle it has to be remembered that the Greek State was a city, not a nation in our sense of the word. This difference of view had a profound effect on political theory. See Professor Bradley's Essay in *Hellenica*, pp. 183 ff.

the extent to which that personality can find expression there, will depend on the character of the corporation. He is under as much obligation to put his Christianity into his work on a Board of Railway Directors as into his action as a citizen of a free State. In his capacity of Railway Director it is his duty to see not only that the affairs of the Company are conducted efficiently and honestly, and that all necessary measures are taken for the safety and comfort of the public, but that the employees are treated with every fairness and consideration. When he has done this, he has almost exhausted the spiritual possibilities that legitimately belong to his position. A Railway Board, as such, affords him very restricted scope for the expression of his Christian convictions. With the State it is otherwise. Its existence is not accidental, but essential to humanity. Like the family, it is a fundamental form of man's social life. Only in it and through it does his individuality realise itself. In incalculable ways the personal and the corporate life of a people are interwoven. If, then, the State is simply the people speaking with a collective and authoritative voice, the crucial question is, *How far can it rightly be made by them representative of their personal Christianity?* If in an overwhelming proportion they are individually Christians, and sincerely hold that the faith of Christ is the one sure

motive and guarantee for the best life of men, are they bound in loyalty to their Lord to strive that the State shall itself embody this faith? It has been often maintained that they are so bound, and that any defection from this standard is a disparagement of the religion they profess. That was the ground taken by those who opposed the removal of the civil disabilities of the Jews. It is the ground on which the civil Establishment of the Church has frequently been advocated. To refuse to identify the State with what is definitely Christian was to put a brand of disapproval on Christianity itself: it was a repudiation of the authority of Christ which ought to be supreme over nations as over individuals, and supreme in much the same sense both as regards ethic and belief. Is this a right interpretation of national duty?

A very little reflection shows that many obligations which are imperative for the individual do not exist for the State. Christ imposes forgiveness as a paramount duty on His followers. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive you your trespasses." Though a man has been injured, yet if he finds that the offender confesses his fault and manifests real contrition, he is not only warranted according to Christ's law in overlooking the offence, he is enjoined to do so: nay, just in proportion as he is conscious of his own

debt to the mercy of God, will he freely and joyfully remit another's debt to him. To insist on exposing and branding the evil-doer, to restrict his dealings with him within the bare limits of justice, would be a violation of his own best nature, a forfeiture of the privileges which have become his through divine grace. But such action, far from being incumbent on the State, is not even possible for it. It works by broad, prescribed rules. A judge or jury may take account of circumstances and motives in the way of reducing the penalty. But this is occasional, incidental; and in almost all cases of this kind the reduction of penalty is not properly an act of mercy, but an act of justice. The crime is regarded as less than normal, and this necessitates a lesser punishment. There is no such thing as *free remission.*[1] The entire spirit of the law is hostile to it. No penitence, however sincere, can relieve a legal court from inflicting punishment on the wrong-doer. This retributive function belongs to the law: it does not belong to the individual. In some cases the State's action will be very different from what the highest morality demands. But it is incapable of becoming the instrument of the

[1] The Crown has legally the right to pardon altogether; and the fact that it is the Crown only, shows that a trace of the *personal* character of forgiveness is left. But this is an extreme instance: it is an exception which "proves the rule."

highest morality. Were it to try to be so, it would fail miserably. It may be an utterly unchristian thing for a landlord to demand immediate payment of rent from a struggling widow. But the law is not unchristian, because it does not recognise her special necessities and insist on the foregoing of the debt. From its very nature it has no power to adapt itself to the infinite variety of human character and opportunity; and if it were to draw distinctions which every Christian observes in his relations with others, it would produce civil chaos. Yet it is not therefore unchristian or anti-christian: it may be thoroughly Christian so far as it goes, but it can only go a certain length. Its basal principle is the administration of justice, and no other principle, even if it be inherently higher, can be admitted, unless it helps to further or confirm this.

III.

We thus see that even in the moral sphere there are qualities which it is of the first moment that a community should possess, and yet which lie wholly beyond the province of the State to guarantee, and which it has no means of creating or securing. And if the State as an organised form of government cannot contain the complete *ethic* of Christianity or be employed to subserve or foster it, this throws light on the relation

which it sustains to Christianity as a *doctrinal system.* No man in modern days has done more to bring out the bearings of the problem than Dr. Arnold of Rugby: for none has attempted to carry out so clearly and consistently the theory of the unity of Church and State. He held that the object of both "was alike the highest welfare of man, and that as the State could not accomplish this, unless it acted with the wisdom and goodness of the Church, nor the Church, unless it was invested with the sovereign power of the State, the State and the Church in their ideal form were not two societies, but one; and that it is only in proportion as this identity is realised in each particular country that man's perfection and God's glory can be established on earth. ... Accordingly, no full development of the Church, no full Christianisation of the State, could in his judgment take place, until the Church should have become not a subordinate, but a sovereign society; not acting indirectly on the world, through inferior instruments, but directly through its own government, the supreme legislature." All public officers of the State would feel themselves to be necessarily officers of the Church. "Then the whole nation, amidst much variety of form, ceremonial and opinion would at last feel that the great ends of Christian and national society, now for the first time realised to their view, were a far stronger bond of union between

Christians, and a far deeper division from those who were not Christians, than any subordinate principle either of agreement or separation." The strongest earthly bond would be identical with the bond of Christian fellowship; the highest earthly power would avowedly minister to the advancement of Christian holiness; crimes would be regarded as sins; in a word, "Christianity would be the acknowledged basis of citizenship."[1] In conformity with this view, Dr. Arnold was strongly opposed to the Bill for abolishing the civil disabilities of the Jews. "I would thank the Parliament for having done away with distinctions between Christian and Christian: I would pray that distinctions be kept up between Christians and non-Christians. . . . The Jews are strangers in England and have no more claim to legislate for it than a lodger has to share with the landlord in the management of his house." . . . "I would give them the honorary citizenship which was so often given by the Romans,—*i.e.* the private rights of citizens, *jus commercii* and *jus connubii*,—but not the public rights, *jus suffragii* and *jus honorum*."[2]

One is so accustomed to hear vague talk about the "consecration of the State" as a result which can be achieved by a few official religious cere-

[1] Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, vol. i. 198–200.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. 28, 30.

monies or the formal recognition of the Church by the government, that it is refreshing to find a thinker like Dr. Arnold who endeavours with at least relative consistency to work out the theory to its proper results. Perfect consistency even he does not attain, nor would it be possible without resort, as in bygone times, to some form of violent persecution. But as the teaching of history and our present-day ethical standard alike pronounce that course intolerable, he is fairly thoroughgoing in his proposals. Now it is easy to pass detailed criticisms on his system, to ask, *e.g.*, how he would define the term Christian and what various sects it would include, or how men occupying such different standpoints as the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, and the Evangelical Protestant could combine harmoniously in any unified State policy, when their Christianity is to be the determining factor in their political action. Confessedly his theory is an ideal, and all ideals are hard to reduce to practice. Partial approximations towards them are the most one can expect. But the first thing is to be sure that the ideal is a right one, that it *is* eminently to be desired that "Christianity should be the acknowledged basis of citizenship."

On what ground can Christian belief be made a condition of enjoying civil rights? Certainly not merely on the ground of its truth. There are many things true or held to be such, which

the State never dreams of turning into a test of admission within its pale. The franchise is not made to depend on the belief of the law of gravitation or the wave-theory of light. Whatever vagaries a man may have with regard to these or a hundred other truths which have won general acceptance, he is not on that account deprived of his vote. The only reason that can be assigned why no one shall become a citizen unless he believes in Christianity is not because Christianity is true, but because, while being true, the belief of it is indispensable to make a man a good citizen, inasmuch as the lack of it so impairs the moral sense as to unfit him for the discharge of duties which the State is entitled to exact.

How then does such a theory work out? In order that Christian belief may bear its proper fruit, it must in the first place be absolutely sincere: it must be a genuine, inward conviction controlling the man's thought and life. Mere acquiescence in the doctrines of the creed will have no ennobling effect: will not lead him in the least to look at political matters in the spirit that befits a disciple of Christ. Such a man cannot be barred out by any tests the State can apply. It may be said, he cannot be barred out from the Church either: for the Church cannot estimate motives or judge the heart, and he may profess the Christian faith from a desire for a certain reputation in the community. That is true, and

where it occurs it constitutes a grave peril to the Church's life. But how enormously that peril would be increased if the Church were so conjoined with the State as to be the only portal of entrance to it. So long as it stands apart as a purely spiritual institution, a man may or, as is quite as likely at present, he may not, suffer in the opinion of his neighbours by declining to associate himself with it; but no other penalty is inflicted on him. He remains a free man, in possession of all his political rights. Moreover, the Church exists to further a certain religious belief. That is its *raison d'être*. In insisting on doctrinal profession it keeps within its acknowledged sphere. It is a voluntary association, and a man need not belong to it unless he choose, just as he need not belong to a Conservative organisation in politics. Refusal to join a religious or a political society may entail some social disadvantages. Of these the law cannot take account. They are of the same inevitable order as the annoyances which a conscientious man has often to undergo in loyalty to his convictions. But let a man be told that, unless he enter the Church, he has no status as a citizen, that he is a stranger and foreigner, a mere "lodger" in a Christian country, and you tempt him with the heaviest bribes to make a Christian profession. If he is a moral indifferentist, he will have no difficulty in assuming a virtue which he has not,

when by so doing he passes at once from civil subjection to civil freedom. A premium has been put on hypocrisy, and the citizenship of the nation will be deluged with unreal professors. What kind of contribution will they make to the Christianisation of government? The result will be not the consecration of the State, which was the aim in view, but the degradation of the Church.

But while this identification of the two societies will have no effect in excluding from citizenship a certain class of men who are Christian only in name, there are those whom it *will* exclude: all who, whether as Jews or Agnostics, sincerely dissent from the Christian religion, and are too high-minded, too sensitive in honour, to pretend to believe what they do not. Their honesty is itself a very valuable asset in the life of a nation, and is certain in many cases to be conjoined with rare moral qualities, with a passion for freedom and justice, and with a readiness to labour and suffer to make these prevail. Is it not the merest commonplace that some of those who hold aloof from Christian dogma introduce into their discussion of political problems a more elevated ethic, an ethic more consonant to the temper and purpose of Christ, than animates the judgment of multitudes within the Church?[1] By debarring

[1] "It is a most significant fact," says Lecky, "that in Catholic countries the highest moral level in public life is now rarely to be found among those who specially represent the spirit and teaching

such men from its fellowship the State simply impoverishes itself, deprives itself of forces which would enable it better to fulfil its function, by helping to make its laws more equitable and more humane. Nor is this all: for it not only lowers its life in the present, it suppresses elements needed for its proper and fuller development in the future. Every one recognises nowadays that the policy followed by the English Government in the reigns of James I. and Charles I., of associating the State with the conception of Christianity then dominant, depleted England of some of its best blood, just as the Massacre of St. Bartholomew depleted France. The loss of the Puritans and of the Huguenots lowered the social and political character of both peoples by the expulsion of elements of incalculable value to national progress. And the same false principle which led to these persecutions underlies all endeavours to utilise Christianity as a test of civil rights, and works out, though in a minor degree, to the same disastrous results. We may forswear the more violent methods of oppression, but so long as we refuse to a theological heretic his place as a citizen, we run the risk of cutting off from the commonwealth what in days to come might be a potent and beneficial

of their Church, and much more frequently among men who are unconnected with it, and often with all dogmatic theology." *Map of Life*, p. 181.

influence. We bind the State to a particular religious view, disown as "strangers and foreigners" all who dissent from that view, and thus illegitimately buttress and stereotype it.

Christian theology itself has been an immense debtor to those who have disputed and opposed it. Its antagonists have been its helpers. They have laid bare its defects, its exaggerations. They have compelled it to take account of facts to which it was blind. They have revealed new truths and new aspects of the old truth. They have been the means of making it a more adequate expression of the very revelation which it claimed to interpret.[1] In former times it was sought to suppress all this critical and antagonistic movement by fire and sword, by cruelty and maltreatment in every shape. To-day it is suggested that we should suppress it, so far as possible, in a less offensive way, by excluding it from free play in the corporate or organised life of the people. The misbeliever shall not be put to death or imprisoned: he shall be permitted peacefully to reside within our borders, and to follow his trade: but no matter how capable or upright he may be, he shall hold no office in the community, he shall have no vote. He can advocate his opinions as an individual, and publish

[1] "Il n'y a point d'erreur ni d'hérésie même dont l'Église n'ait tiré quelque utilité." Brunetière, *Sur les chemins de la Croyance*, Préface, p. 20.

them: but they shall be discredited as those of a pariah, he shall bear no part in the councils of the nation. Can any method be devised which would more certainly enfeeble the body politic, dwarf its intelligence and moral force and give a fictitious permanence to particular and temporary modes of thought? Experience has shown that when a Roman Catholic government rules out Protestants from civil privileges, the best interests of the State suffer. How then can we suppose that a Christian government — using the word Christian in its widest sense—can rule out Agnostics without a similar result? What really perverts our judgment in the matter is a confused idea that by these political exclusions on religious grounds we are maintaining the authority of Christ. In reality we are disowning it. We are exalting the dogmatic at the expense of the ethical; and lay ourselves open to Christ's expostulation, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"[1] We are violating the essential law of Christian conduct, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."[2] There is nothing clearer than that all men harbour a deep sense of injury under any political system which penalises them for their religious opinions. Every one is conscious of resentment in such a case, and that which one knows he would justly

[1] Luke vi. 46. [2] Matt. vii. 12.

resent for himself he ought not to inflict upon another.[1]

One of the most painful things in the history of Christianity is the readiness with which its professors have in the past snatched at every weapon which enabled them, as they believed, to fight its cause, to add to its adherents or to give it a securer hold of the community or of the world. Christianity meant to them a certain creed, a certain form of worship and of Church government; but they totally forgot that these are but means for the production of a certain type of character framed after the teaching and example of Christ Himself, and that, if this is not produced, whatever remains is not the Christian religion. The Incarnation of the Son of God has no meaning apart from its moral and spiritual content: it did not take place for itself and *in abstracto*, but for the transfiguration of humanity into the likeness of God. "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works."[2]

[1] It is worthy of note that Dr. Arnold, who so strenuously advocated the idea of a "strong social bond," came in his later years to modify his view, and to lay more stress on the principle of personal liberty and responsibility. "I am beginning to think," he says, "that the idea (of such a bond) may be overstrained, and that this attempt to merge the soul and will of the individual man in the general body is, when fully developed, contrary to the very essence of Christianity." Stanley's *Life*, vol. ii. 234.

[2] Tt. ii. 14.

The new life of fellowship with Himself into which He brings us includes all the "natural" virtues honoured by the ancients, such as justice, courage, temperance; but it carries them out to their ultimate expression, and combines with them its own rarer and more distinctive qualities of faith, love, purity, humility, patience, beneficence: and I am a Christian only in so far as I strive to make this life my own. Could there be a greater delusion, then, than to seek to prove my loyalty to Christ by methods which contravene the plain dictates of justice and are a double outrage when judged by the finer instincts of Christian fairness and consideration? I am honouring the badge while negating what it stands for: I negate it in my own conduct, and lead to its negation by others whom I prevail on to adopt the badge. The Christianity which they accept under these conditions they will proceed to illustrate with a zeal more intemperate than my own; and will estimate their fidelity to it by the lengths of violent injustice to which they go in maintaining and extending it.

The excesses in this direction which were once practised are possible no longer. The theory on which they were based has been discredited by the logic of facts. It was found that practically it would not work. As the Roman Empire failed to exterminate the early Church, so the Church failed to exterminate religious opinions divergent

from her own. The very message which she bore could not but in the end undermine her claim to compulsory authority. It emphasised the worth of the individual soul and the sacredness of its responsibility to God, and aroused it to motives and convictions which had no reference to earthly power and would brook no interference from it. Religious persecution did not receive its deathblow from the mere development of the natural sense of justice in humanity, or from considerations of political well-being; but from the new spiritual conception of human life and duty which the Gospel introduced. It was pre-eminently the Christian sects which made its continuance impossible; they refused to be put down by force; they set forth in a way which the State in its own interest could not ignore, the rights of man as a moral being. Not infrequently also the protest came from isolated thinkers, who though not connected with any Christian communion had absorbed the ethical spirit of the New Testament. Thus Christianity itself was the primary influence which compelled the Church to see that the characteristic weapons of the State were not for her to use. It was Christ's teaching and example which so heightened and intensified the common conscience that the nation generally came to recognise the limits of the State's function and to insist that they should be observed.

No one has better set forth the delimitation of the two spheres in their contrasted principles and methods of operation than Canon Mozley. The fact is, he says, "that Church and State are two distinct societies; that these societies have two distinct scopes and ends; that with their respective ends what they regard respectively as crimes also differ; and that, therefore, to use the weapons of one of those societies against a sin or error in the other society is a total irrelevancy and misapplication. The Church is a spiritual society, to educate us by revealed doctrine for an eternal existence: the State is a temporal society, to preserve order and peace in the world, and to maintain human life under its proper visible conditions. If, then, I am guilty of spiritual error, no good conduct in the State gives me any claim on the Church. If, on the other hand, I am respectable in the State, I am not punishable by the State for any spiritual error. . . . From this utter irrelevancy springs the plain immorality of the act; the inappropriateness of the punishment constitutes its injustice. For cannot the punished man say—You punish me as a civil ruler, but in what, as representative of civil society, have I offended you? I have done you no wrong in that capacity; I have been living peaceably and honestly, and in conformity with all the claims of the visible community. To such a complaint there is no answer; and

therefore, when society decides against civil punishments for religious errors, that decision is not a mere judgment of expediency; . . . it is a moral judgment upon a question of right or wrong, which has been evoked out of the reason and conscience of mankind, upon the plain state of the case, when once that state of the case was cleared up; when once the inherent distinction of the civil and spiritual bodies had been extricated from the confusion which had identified them."[1]

Now, this delimitation of function is often described as if it meant the extrusion of religion from all civil affairs, the total separation of the secular and sacred in one whole department of human conduct. So able a writer as Bishop Welldon falls into this misconception. He says that the theory widely advocated by English Nonconformists regarding the relation of Church and State "treats the State as something unholy and unclean that cannot lay its defiling hand without profanity upon the Ark of God." Then he proceeds, "It is not necessary here to consider the single text by which the secularisation of the State is said to be justified: 'My kingdom is not of this world.' Our Lord speaks of the origin of His kingdom, not of its character. He means that it depends upon a divine promise and a divine power. He does not mean that it is wholly

[1] Mozley, *University Sermons*, pp. 7, 8.

separate from the world. He does not mean—what would necessarily become His meaning upon the hypothesis of a complete severance between His kingdom and the world—that all who bear His name—not the clergy alone, but all Christians—must live as anchorites or eremites, apart from any practical concern in worldly secular things. . . . The projected severance between the Church and the world supposes, in fact, an impossible condition of things. If one set of persons were members of the Church and another set were citizens of the State, it might be possible to prevent intercommunion or interaction among them. But when the same persons are, or are to a large extent, both Christians and citizens, such a distinction ceases to be practicable. For a man cannot divide himself into two parts; he cannot be a secular being when he acts as citizen, and a spiritual being when he acts as Christian; he cannot now put on and now throw off his conscience or his responsibility."[1]

Does Bishop Welldon imagine that any English Nonconformist is so absurd as to think that a Christian can thus bisect his life, or would wish to do so? Dr. Dale of Birmingham, perhaps the most potent Nonconformist thinker of recent days, was not more emphatic in his contention for the diverse functions of Church and State than in his reiterated insistence that Christ's

[1] *The Consecration of the State*, pp. 24, 27, 28.

authority extends to every province of human energy. "If at any point in the domain either of thought or of action His authority is not asserted —whether in art, literature, commerce or politics —the failure to assert it is criminal and must be retrieved."[1] There may be those who desire to eliminate religion from political affairs, but they are men who would eliminate it altogether from human life. They are agnostics or unbelievers, not Christians. If a man is a Christian, whatever work he undertakes he must perform as a Christian. If he is a ruler, he must be a Christian ruler. But does that imply that he must use every power which his office gives him to promote his Christian belief? Is he to employ every opportunity that he can avail himself of for advancing it? Would we say that a landlord showed a righteous zeal for Christianity by evicting a hard-working and honourable tenant who was guilty of religious dissent or even of indifference to religious observance? Certainly not. We would declare that he was importing into the relations of landlord and tenant a matter which did not belong to them, and that by so doing he was not only acting unfairly as between man and man, but making a travesty of the

[1] *Life of Dale*, by his Son, p. 398. The sentence quoted above is Principal Dale's summary of his father's view, which is expounded at length by himself in his volume, *The Laws of Christ for Common Life*. See also his sermon on "Christ and the State" in *Fellowship with Christ*.

Christianity he professed. And in thus speaking we would not be arguing for the secularisation of a landlord's function, but for its true consecration. When, then, the same language of disapproval is used by some concerning a ruler who devotes the power entrusted to him for other purposes to the furtherance of the Christian faith by imposing disabilities on those who do not share it, in what respect are they chargeable with seeking to secularise the State? They heartily agree with Dr. Welldon that the ruler is bound to carry his religion into his governing duties, but they contend that that is precisely what he fails to do, and that in the worst of ways he exemplifies "the severance of Christianity from the State." This astonishing idea that to refuse to the ruler religious jurisdiction is to deny that he has anything to do with religion, is accompanied by an equally astonishing exegesis of our Lord's words, "My kingdom is not of this world." Dr. Welldon says that they do not describe the character of Christ's kingdom, but its origin, in that it depends on a divine promise and a divine power. But it is just because its origin is different from that of worldly kingdoms that its character is different. It owes its existence specially to the *gracious* purpose of God;[1]

[1] "The State is primarily the visible representative and defender of the divine justice in the temporal order; the Church is primarily the visible representative of the divine mercy and the divine re-

and though it is as really ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ as they, and is developed here below in the actual order of humanity, it is not ἐκ τοῦ κοσμοῦ. It has another aim, and works by other methods: else "would my servants fight."[1] Christ draws the most explicit distinction between the two realms, the temporal and the spiritual. The same man may belong to both, but he is forbidden to think of furthering the spiritual realm by means appropriate to the temporal.

To speak, therefore, as if Christianity must either be nothing to the State or must absolutely control and utilise it for its own ends is to deceive ourselves. A Christian citizen will put his Christianity into his citizenship, as into every relation of his life; but *how much he will put into it will depend on the character of the relation.* Whatever action falls within the proper function of the State he will strive to make Christian. He will judge every law bearing on social well-being by an ethical standard determined largely by his religious faith. He cannot do otherwise. The State exists to secure justice as between man and man; therefore he will labour to render it an embodiment of his highest conception of justice, whether he has reached that conception through

demption in the eternal order. The State has other functions; the Church has other functions; but there is that deep distinction between them." Dale, *Fellowship with Christ*, p. 204.

[1] John xviii. 36.

Christianity or through any other influence. The comparative indifference of governments in former times to the lot of the hapless and submerged in the community has been broken down partly by the bitter practical experience which proved that such a policy was ruinous to the State itself; but even more, perhaps, by the arousing of the moral consciousness, the deepening recognition of the sacred rights and claims of the individual, and the responsibility of society for upholding and vindicating them. Christian conviction has been at the root of that extraordinary development of legislation in regard to the social conditions of life, to the dwellings of the people, to land, to labour, which has so markedly characterised the last half century. But in so far as it has created or quickened this humanitarian activity on the part of the State, it has not lost sight of the specific character which pertains to the State; it has simply revealed new obligations that lie within the State's own province. For it sees that government does not fulfil the ends of a just administration when it merely protects the life and property of rich and poor alike, and leaves them full liberty to adjust matters on their own account; that such a policy would on the contrary in the complex relations of modern civilisation result in the gravest injustice. The normal balance which should exist in the situation of landlord and tenant, of employer and workman,

or genuine unselfishness, and has no power to ensure either the one or the other, the only effect of attempting to do so will be to produce a multitude of counterfeits, thereby caricaturing and perverting the religion it professes to foster. And secondly, in endeavouring to overtake a work which is quite beyond it, the State would fail in its own mission. It would be a case of

> "The vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself
> And falls i' the other."

In seeking to create a kingdom of heaven on earth, it would not even secure social peace and happiness.

IV.

The question then naturally arises, Is the State as such altogether debarred from identifying itself with a definite religious belief? Is there to be no recognition of God or of the Christian faith in its public ceremonials? The answer is that the distinction already drawn between the spheres of Church and State is fundamental. The latter is absolutely forbidden to employ its compulsory authority in the interest of the former in a manner which impairs civil freedom or violates civil justice. But where it observes and maintains these basal principles of freedom and justice, it would be carrying the distinction to a pedantic extreme to say that where the people of a country are pre-

dominantly Christian they are in no case entitled to pay any corporate homage to their creed. No nation is likely to feel bound to follow an abstract theory of the separation of Church and State, so long as the State is not substantially deflected from its own function. In the United States of America, where that separation is emphatically drawn, each House of Congress has a chaplain, and opens its daily proceedings with prayer; the President issues an annual proclamation regarding "Thanksgiving Day"; prayers are offered in the State legislatures; in the army and navy provision is made for religious services conducted by chaplains of various denominations.[1] The general feeling of the community demands this religious expression, because it in no way inflicts any disability on those who dissent from the prevailing faith, who remain as entitled as their Christian neighbours to all the rights of citizens both public and private. They are not hampered by any legal restrictions in the pursuit of their avocation or the attainment of their ambition. It is only after the claims of civil justice have been satisfied that such religious forms and usages are permissible. They are a concession to the sentiment of the people in their corporate capacity; and sentiment, where it does not conflict with deeper principles, has its own place in human affairs.

[1] Bryce, *American Commonwealth*, vol. ii. 701–702.

An entirely different range of considerations is involved when we pass to the problem of the establishment of the Church by the State. It may be plausibly argued that as religion tends more than aught else to produce good citizens, therefore since the State has no qualification for teaching it, it is warranted in supporting the Church, which does teach it, with the full weight of its authority. On this view it enters into a compact with the Church for the furtherance of its own practical purposes. Religion, it is contended, can never be "so weighty a factor in the commonwealth, if it is exemplified only in individual lives, as if it is corroborated by the strength and system of the State. For citizens take their tone, consciously or unconsciously, from the State. What the State honours, they honour. What the State ignores, they ignore." [1] Surely Dr. Welldon allows his zeal here to outrun discretion and commonsense. Does he imagine that in a nation where Christianity is practically universally accepted—for only there would its civil Establishment be possible—the citizens as a whole have no spiritual convictions of their own, that the religious instinct in them is so feeble that they wait for the State to instruct them as to the need and the nature of worship? Of course such a notion is refuted a hundred times over by history and by the plainest facts around us. Men

[1] Welldon, *The Consecration of the State*, p. 33.

are not so abject admirers of the State that they will either do or believe anything at its nod. If they were, what kind of Christianity would be produced in this way? One is reminded of the prophet's words, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."[1] But it is undoubtedly the case that there are in all communities persons who profess to be members of an Established Church, and actually are members, because it is established.[2] "There is no reason," says Dr. Welldon, "to doubt the genuineness of their membership. The recognition which the Church enjoys at the hands of the State is a determining influence upon their minds."[3] One knows that there are many motives of a very mixed character which may induce people to attend religious ordinances, and one ought perhaps to rejoice that they do so, from whatever reason. If he who comes to scoff may remain to pray, so he who comes for the sake of respectability may be aroused to serious reflections on

[1] Isa. xxix. 13: cf. Matt. xv. 8.

[2] By his own confession Lord Chancellor Thurlow was one of them. When in 1788 an attempt was made to repeal the obnoxious Test and Corporation Act, a deputation waited on him to obtain his support. Thurlow heard the deputies very civilly, and then said, "Gentlemen, I'm against you. I am for the Established Church. Not that I have any more regard for the Established Church than for any other Church, but because *it is* established. And if you can get your religion established, I'll be for that too." Crabb Robinson's *Diary*, vol. i. 197. In quoting Lord Thurlow's words I have thought it advisable to leave out the expletives.

[3] *The Consecration of the State*, p. 34.

his duty to God and man. But when it is a question of Church membership, one desiderates a more strenuous standard. Nothing can be more detrimental to the Church's character and mission in the world than to speak with approbation of those who would hold aloof from her fellowship but for the patronage which the State extends to her, and who probably would withdraw from her if that patronage were to cease. That there are such people in her communion is true; but is it a fact which any Christian minister can rejoice in, or be content with? And yet Dr. Welldon deliberately advocates the Establishment of the Church in order to produce this result. By these means her numbers may be vastly increased: but the more successful she is, she will drift the further from the New Testament ideal as a spiritual society.

The truth is that those who argue thus are speaking far more from the standpoint of the State than of the Church. For, however low the Church may fall spiritually, she is bound to exercise a certain moral influence, if she is to exist at all; and if she did no more than raise the tone of the community, or impose restraints on the evil-doer, she would simplify the problem of national government. The more people, therefore, she can add to her membership, even on the lowest terms, the more assistance does she render to the State in the discharge of its own function.

But if the State gains by this arrangement, is it not plainly at the cost of the Church? Her *distinctive* message is not that men should lead respectable lives or even attain a high standard of conduct, but that as sinners they should welcome the forgiving grace of God in Christ, and should be transformed by the renewing of their mind through the power of the Spirit. For her to minimise this Gospel, to water it down, by allowing men to suppose that its validity and imperativeness are affected in one iota by the action of the State in granting or withholding its recognition, is to forget her mission. And the evil is still further aggravated when, for the purpose of obtaining or preserving such recognition, she consents to the abridgment of her inalienable right and duty of self-government.

It may be questioned also whether the State itself does not in the end lose more than it gains by the Church's surrender of her characteristic note of spirituality. By lessening her distinctive claim as an autonomous spiritual society, and appealing for support on grounds that are extraneous to her real character and function, the Church will no doubt gather to herself a larger proportion of the population, and thus so far simplify the problem of the State by subjecting to a certain degree of moral or religious influence sections of the community which might lapse into misconduct. But, on the other hand, the tem-

perature of the Church's own life is lowered in the process; she will not inspire those who belong to her with the old spiritual enthusiasms, nor bear to the world at large the same divine witness. And the dying down of these high impulses and convictions in the nation is, in the ultimate issue, the greatest of all losses to the State.

These dangers would attend the civil establishment of religion even if the Christianity of a country were summed up in, and represented by, one dominant Church. But that is not the situation which actually confronts us. In many lands, and especially in Protestant communities, the Christian Church is broken up. In some cases these various denominations of Christians differ from each other in polity, in ritual, and above all in what they deem of primary importance, in belief. They are equally devoted to their respective views, equally sincere in maintaining them as most in harmony with the mind of Christ, equally self-sacrificing in their efforts to make them prevail, and equally convinced that the acceptance of them would foster the best life of the nation. When, therefore, the State identifies itself with one only out of two or more Christian denominations, it is not extending its recognition to Christianity, but to a particular form of it. So far as its patronage is an encouragement to Christianity in that form, the withholding of it is a discouragement to it in other forms. It

gives to Christianity with one hand and takes away from it with the other. But for aught the State knows, these other denominations are, in proportion to their opportunities, contributing quite as really to the moral strength and elevation of the community as the one with which it is united. It is not in virtue of what divides that one Christian Church from the others that it influences the conduct of which the State has to take account, but in virtue of what is common to it and other religious communions.

The consequence is that the State not only fails by such a policy in paying its tribute to Christianity, but it impairs, instead of elevating, the social welfare of the people. By drawing lines of separation between Christian and Christian, it introduces elements of strain and exasperation into the relations of those who, even though they might stand apart, would otherwise more readily agree to differ. Mr. Bryce, the most competent of witnesses, says that in the United States there is "a kindlier feeling between all denominations, Roman Catholics included, a greater readiness to work together for common charitable aims, than between Catholics and Protestants in France or Germany, or between Anglicans and Nonconformists in England. There is a rivalry between the leading denominations to extend their bounds, to erect and fill new churches, to raise great sums for church purposes. But it

is a friendly rivalry, which does not provoke bad blood, because the State stands neutral, and all churches have a free field."[1] Even a casual observer of the religious and ecclesiastical life of the United States is struck by this prevailing friendliness of spirit; nor can there be any doubt whatever that it is due in no small measure to the fact that each religious communion feels itself unimpeded by any external power in the discharge of its function, and that no one is tempted to arrogant treatment of its neighbours by its consciousness of a preferential political status. There is less jealousy, less friction; the moral atmosphere is sweeter. Thus the absence of an Established Church tends to produce a happier political result: it fosters that social contentment and brotherhood which is among the primary conditions of the State's prosperity.

But if there is this civic gain, is there a counterbalancing religious loss? In what sense is England, which has a State Church, more Christian than America, which has none? Attendance at public worship, the sale of religious books, the amount of respect paid to Christian precepts and ministers, the interest taken in theological questions, the connection of philanthropic reforms with religion—these are some of the chief indications of the part which religious belief plays in the thought and conduct of a people. Mr. Bryce's

[1] *American Commonwealth*, vol. ii. 711–712; cf. 812–813.

verdict is that "in all these respects the influence of Christianity seems to be, if we look not merely to the numbers, but also to the intelligence, of the persons influenced, greater and more widespread in the United States than in any part of Western Continental Europe, and I think greater than in England."[1] The refusal of the State to associate itself with any particular Church has the effect, not of weakening the hold of religion on the people, but of strengthening it, because the whole Christianity of the country is more readily recognised as one force, however manifold in its operation; and each section of it, being neither favoured nor hampered by interference from without, devotes itself with eagerness to its proper work.[2]

It is preposterous to call a State religious according as it does or does not make a formal profession of religion: for example, to call Spain Christian and America godless, as if, so long as the dogmatic of Christianity is preserved, it does not much matter about the ethic. This is to substitute form for reality, to imagine that facts are changed by giving them fancy names. Just in so far as we think that a government becomes consecrated by writing a legend on its brow or

[1] *Ibid.* ii. 710–711.

[2] See an interesting passage in Gladstone's *Gleanings of Past Years*, vol. vii. pp. 148–151, showing the reasons which led him to relax the view, so strenuously maintained in his early work on *The State in its Relations with the Church*, as to the union of Church and State.

putting pious phrases into its lips, we are losing sight of the main issue. Nor have we more than an elementary conception of what constitutes a Christian nation, if we suppose that its Christianity can be expressed in its action as a State.

> "How small, of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which laws or kings can cause or cure."

There are sins which are not crimes, and can never be dealt with as such. The State can say, You shall not pick that man's pocket, but it cannot prevent an employer withholding from a workman a fair share of the profit of his labour, nor a servant from robbing his master by dawdling away his time unobserved. It can protect a man from gross abuse or libel, but not from the contemptuous airs of the proud. Yet these are injuries as really as the other; but no court on earth can deal with them. They await a higher tribunal. Into that inner sphere of motive and ideal it is the function of the Church to penetrate by the appeal which it makes through spiritual teaching and consecrated living to the free response of the individual soul. The measure of its success in doing so is the measure of the Christianity of a people.

There is one part, however, of the State's function in which its right relation to Christianity is confessedly hard to determine—the Education

of the Young. It is often said that it no more belongs to it to make provision for the religious needs of the children than for those of their parents, and that the same objections which apply to the civil Establishment of the Church apply also to the teaching of Christian truth in any form in the national schools. But the cases are not parallel. The objections to Church Establishment are twofold: from the side of the Church, as an abridgment of the Church's essential freedom and self-government, and from the side of the State, as an intrusion into a sphere not properly pertaining to it, and a violation of its own fundamental function. But the former objection has no bearing on the problem of religious instruction in schools. In no respect is the special and autonomous character of the Church as a spiritual body affected, as to some degree it cannot but be in the case of its statutory establishment. Further, the State does not occupy the same position towards the parent as towards the child. It does not interfere with his employment of his time; it does not say, You shall give up to me so many hours on so many days of the week, and I shall undertake the training of your mind and character, and impart to you the knowledge that is necessary to fit you for the duties of life. But it does this to the boy or girl. It does not allow them to grow up in illiteracy or ignorance. It insists for their good and for its own that they

shall submit to instruction, and sends them forth moulded largely both as regards information and capacity by its influence. Few will deny that it is entitled to act thus, or that it would fail in its duty if it neglected to do so. The State therefore is *in the school already*, not as an interloper, but by inherent right, and in discharge of one of its elementary functions.

But if it must educate the children, what does education cover? It is not simply the sharpening of the intellect, but the drawing out and building up of the nature, the evoking of the latent possibilities of the child, and putting him in possession of himself as a rational and moral being. The development of his mental faculties and the impartation of various kinds of knowledge are necessary for making a capable citizen of him; but they are by no means the only things necessary. If his ethical instincts are not trained and directed, the quickening of his intelligence will not be a gain at all; it will only make him, as the Duke of Wellington said, a clever devil. The neglect of this correlation between the ethical and the intellectual has made the "spread of education" productive of very dubious results, and is in no small measure responsible for the spirit of discontent, self-assertion, and irreverence manifested so widely by the younger generation. If, then, it is needful for the State to see that the child's mind is not untutored, it is quite as needful for it to

take precautions that his character does not remain undisciplined. It lays hold of him at the most susceptible time of life, when his capacities are, as it were, in embryo, and when the moral nature in especial receives a set or bias which affects his whole future.

But most certainly the best moral qualities can never be evoked in the child if we eliminate the religious element from his instruction. And as the fathers and mothers in a Christian country associate all their own highest conceptions of duty with their faith in the God whom Jesus called Father, they cannot but desire that their children should possess what they find to be vitalising in their own lives. That is, they will count no education adequate which lacks religious teaching. It will indeed be acknowledged by all that the Home and the Church are the primary agents in the child's religious discipline; but the question still remains whether the school has not also some function in this respect, when it has so much to do with the development of his mind and character. Ideally, from the Christian standpoint, there can be no doubt that it has such a function, and that any parent whose Christianity was more than a name, and who was free to choose the kind of school he preferred for his son or daughter, would select one in which the curriculum included both secular and religious education. It was the wish to secure both which helped to perpetuate so long

the voluntary method of supplying the educational needs of the people, unsatisfactory as that method often was on the secular side. When, however, the State had to intervene in its own interest and establish a national system of schools, the religious difficulty emerged at once.

No perfect solution of it is possible, because the facts which have to be taken account of point diverse ways.

On the one hand, if it be true that the State is not warranted in penalising its subjects by civil disabilities for their religious opinions, and if by doing so it contravenes its own basal principles of freedom and justice, then abstract consistency would seem to suggest that in the schools which it maintains it should not put the stamp of its approval on any form of faith.

On the other hand, various considerations enter in to perplex. Is the Bible to be excluded from the curriculum because it is the text-book of Christianity? Hardly any Christian nation will assent to that; on broad educational grounds its admission will be demanded. In the public schools of America the simple reading of it only is permitted, "without note or comment." The idea underlying this restriction appears to be that, while every sectarian interpretation is ruled out, the Bible sayings and incidents will bear their own ennobling message to the child. But this hardly amounts to what is properly called

religious instruction. Even Professor Huxley goes further, for he would allow the reading of the Bible, "with such grammatical, geographical, and historical explanations by a lay-teacher as may be needful, with rigid exclusion of any further theological teaching than that contained in the Bible itself";[1] adding that the teacher would do well not to go beyond the precise words of the Bible. Such a proposal, not a little remarkable as coming from one who was himself an agnostic, gives ample room for religious as contrasted with theological instruction. It really concedes what Bishop Welldon claims when he says, "In a national view every wise citizen will recognise how far more important it is that English children should receive a religious education, if it be only in the elementary truths of religion, than that a certain number of children, and they alone, should receive what is in his eyes a full or sufficient religious education."[2]

There are two reasons which might be urged for the adoption of this course. 1. In the diversity of belief that prevails in Christendom, it is obviously inequitable for a State to give a preference to one denominational faith over the others in the teaching which it provides for the children. If, therefore, religion is not to be placed under ban, it must consist of the truths

[1] *Science and Education*, p. 398. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 13.

practically common to the various Churches. 2. It is this common element of religious truth which alone is really germane to the purpose which the State ought to have in view, the production of good citizens. It is not what is distinctive in the Anglican view of Christianity, or the Presbyterian or the Congregational, which fits the boy for the duties of citizenship, but the fundamental Christian convictions which are shared by all of them — the fact of personal accountability, the fear of God, the love of Christ. Other doctrinal or ecclesiastical truths may be of high value, even in a spiritual sense, but it cannot be said that they are necessary for the discharge of obligations which the State has a title to enjoin, and consequently they do not fall within the function of the State to impart. That is essentially the work of the Churches themselves.

But it may be asked, how far is an arrangement of this kind compatible with a fair treatment of those subjects of the State who stand aloof from all Christian communions? They may be a very small minority of the population; but have they not a right to complain of the State's action? No man was a more pronounced dissentient from the prevailing faith of his countrymen than Professor Huxley, and his verdict on this point is emphatic. "If I were compelled to choose for one of my own children between

a school in which real religious instruction is given, and one without it, I should prefer the former, even though the child might have to take a good deal of theology with it. Nine-tenths of a dose of bark is mere half-rotten wood; but one swallows it for the sake of the particles of quinine, the beneficial effect of which may be weakened but is not destroyed by the wooden dilution, unless in a few cases of exceptionally tender stomachs."[1] This, if somewhat sardonically expressed, is surely simple common-sense. A man must be animated by a truly Lucretian antipathy to religion, if he objects to the evoking in his child of the religious feeling which, as Huxley says, "is the essential basis of conduct," on the ground that it will be accompanied by certain intellectual conceptions of which he himself disapproves. There would of course be a conscience clause for the protection of those whose parents desired to withdraw them. But experience shows that such withdrawal would very seldom occur; for it is notorious that parents, who perhaps never enter a church themselves, are almost always willing, and in most cases anxious, that their children should be taught some religious truth, believing that it will have a good effect on their behaviour. No better proof could be given how universal is the conviction that the moral is enfeebled when divorced

[1] *Science and Education*, p. 396.

from the religious. There might, indeed, be a small number of the extreme secularist type, who would count themselves aggrieved as citizens by the existence in the national schools of any Christian teaching however elementary. But if ninety-nine hundredths of the community desire it, it would be irrational on account of any abstract theory to say that their view must be set aside in favour of that of the remaining hundredth, especially when the giving of such instruction is, if not directly within the State's function, on the border-line of it. The question is, What is best for the moral welfare of the State? If the overwhelming majority of the people are of opinion that the total exclusion of religion from the schools would lower the character of the nation, while an infinitesimal minority hold that religious belief has a narrowing and poisoning effect, surely the former have a title, simply as citizens, to claim that their conviction should prevail.

The objection that the inclusion of religious instruction is unjust in that it introduces a religious test for teachers would carry weight if the instruction were distinctly denominational, but if it is confined to elementary Christian truth, the difficulty practically vanishes. For the teachers, with very few exceptions, would belong to one or other of the Christian Churches; and in the case of those who had conscientious scruples this part

of their work could be delegated to another member of the school staff.

It must be confessed, however, that this plan of confining religious teaching to what Bishop Welldon calls the elementary truths of religion held in common by the different denominations, is only feasible where these denominations are prepared to abate their distinctive claims, and to accept in the schools merely an instalment of the creed they respectively hold. If they are separated by a wide gulf like Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, or like High Anglicanism and Congregationalism, it is futile to expect them to co-operate. They approach the whole religious question from quite opposite standpoints. They differ as to what *is* "elementary" and fundamental. The Roman Catholic or the High Anglican starts from the Church with its initiatory ordinance of Baptism and construes everything through that; the Protestant Evangelical starts from the relation of the soul to God. There is no possible way of reconciling them. If you say to the Anglican, Surely you cannot affirm that a child needs to be trained in Anglicanism in order to be a good citizen, he would probably reply, Certainly not: but I cannot consent that the State shall put its imprimatur on religious teaching which *implies a disparagement* of what I regard as essential Christian truth. The Nonconformist, on the other hand, will as resolutely

oppose the putting of that imprimatur on a conception of the Church against which his denominational existence is a protest. Where a nation is largely divided between views of religion so entirely contradictory, the identification of the national authority with one of them is, to say the least, gravely impolitic. The State which acts thus creates social strain and discord, and so far fails in securing the primary ends for which it exists.

Under such conditions, seeing that the people as a whole desire religious instruction for their children but differ hopelessly as to its character, the Churches must be left to supply it; and as they cannot adequately overtake the work by means of their public services and their Sunday schools, facilities should be afforded to them to impart such instruction in the national schools at their own cost, and under the safeguard of a conscience clause. Two or three types of religious teaching would meet the necessities of the community. The advantages of this method are obvious. There would be no infringement of any one's conscientious convictions; instead of an attenuated form of instruction, there would be liberty to impart religious truth to the extent deemed necessary or advisable; the instructor would be specially chosen because of his fitness, in knowledge and personal character, for this duty; and no question of religious test could

arise in regard to those who formed the regular teaching staff. If it be urged that this separation of the children into divisions labelled with denominational names would keep before their minds the sectarian aspects of Christianity, it is enough to point out that this sectarianism is a fact with which in other ways they are only too familiar, and that it is the existence of it in the nation which constitutes the problem of the school.

The most careful reflection would seem to show that, when viewed from the Christian standpoint, the function of the State in the sphere of education cannot be determined by any rigid rule as to the separation of secular and religious; that what is substantially equitable in one country would be manifestly unfair and oppressive in another, and that every settlement must take account of the special circumstances of religious opinion among the people; but that, while this is so, the dominant trend of modern thought is in the direction of restricting the intervention of the State to conduct as distinguished from opinion. As Mr. Gladstone said in 1865, "The limit of possible variation between character and opinion, ay, between character and belief, is widening and will widen."[1] If that was true forty years ago, it is much truer to-day. Therefore the best Christian is not he who, disregarding the peculiar function of the State, seeks to turn it into an

[1] Morley's *Life*, ii. 432.

instrument of religious propagandism, but he who refuses to ask from the State what in justice to itself and to its subjects as a whole it has no right to grant.

V.

But the functions of a State are not exhausted in making and administering laws for the right government of its own subjects: it holds certain relations to other States and has perpetually to take action in regard to them. In its international duty each State acts as a unit: it occupies in many respects the position of a person in his dealing with other persons: and yet in another sense as a corporate body it is not a person, and can only be so described "analogically." How far, then, does the authority of Christ, which rules the conduct of the individual, apply to the State in its international action?

Some have actually maintained that it does not apply at all: that the State is subject neither to the golden rule nor to the law of justice, as these exist in private morality; that it *must* covet houses and fields; that it ought to anticipate a threatened blow with an energetic counter-stroke; that it would be folly of it, for its own welfare, not to make use of spies, bribery and corruption. Where it is allowable to take life, as the State does, it cannot be improper to deceive. "Altruism," says Professor Ruemelin, "is the gospel

of the citizen, self-preservation that of the State."[1]

One's first surprise at such a theory is that the author should so emphatically exclude the moral factor from public and political action, and yet hope to retain it in its highest form and efficiency in private life. Man's nature is not built in compartments. If he plays the villain as a patriotic citizen, he is likely to find the part useful in compassing his individual ends, and if he restrains himself in that particular it will soon cease to be from any ethical consideration. The notion of thus bisecting his conduct into two non-communicating spheres may be a lively paradox, but it is a palpable absurdity. Apart, however, from this attempt to combine two incompatibles, to say that the one principle of the State's life is self-preservation, is entirely ambiguous. The first instinct of a wild animal is self-preservation: it protects itself, provides for itself, by any and every means. Man does not: the higher capacities that belong to him impose new obligations; the violent appropriation of what is another's has a different significance for him from what it has for the mere animal. Just because he can rise higher than the brute, he can sink lower; and he does so sink, when he simply follows the line of animal instinct. Now the policy of a State is devised by human

[1] *Politics and the Moral Law*, by Gustav Ruemelin, late Chancellor of the University of Tübingen.

brains, it is carried through by human will and resource ; therefore in so far as it is controlled by the animal principle of self-preservation, without regard to ethical motives and results, it is a perversion of nature, it is the employment of rational powers for ends which are only permissible when pursued with the directness of blind instinct. In short, the fundamental question is, What is the 'self' in the State which is to be preserved? Is it simply a bundle of passions, or is it an intelligent unity? If its action is the product of forethought, and subject to subsequent reflection and examination,—and this is as true of the policy of a nation as of the conduct of an individual,—then it is in its very essence amenable to a moral standard. No surer proof of this could be given than in the reaction which follows upon a national excess of selfishness. "Times in which international law has been seriously disregarded have been followed by periods in which the European conscience has done penance by putting itself under straiter obligations than those which it before acknowledged."[1] It is no marvel that that which happens in the individual should happen also in the community or the State : the marvel would be if it did not : for the State is simply a corporation of individuals, and has no existence apart from them. Further, history tells us that among the many causes, economical and

[1] Hall, *International Law*, Preface to 3rd edition.

other, which bring about the downfall of nations, the most potent is moral degeneracy, operating not only in their internal life, but in their relation to their neighbours. Breaches of faith, grasping ambition, gross disregard of the legitimate interests of other nations, are a fruitful source of decay and dissolution; and yet all of these are courses which they are likely to adopt if they count self-preservation, denuded of its ethical obligations, as their one dominating aim. In that case, "they are not long for this world," for morality is of the nature of things.

But while this endeavour to rule out the moral element from international action is refuted by the most obvious facts, it does not follow that such action is to be judged by the same moral standard that applies to personal conduct. It has already been shown that some ethical qualities which we demand in the relations between man and man cannot be manifested by the State in its treatment of its citizens. It cannot remit a punishment on the ground of the penitence of the offender, however sincere; it cannot freely forego a debt. It is impossible for it to give full play to moral impulses; it has, from its inherent character, to act in general according to legal rule, and can only depart from it in exceptional cases where the rule has to be modified by equity. But equity, as understood by the law, can never cover the area of morality. If, then, the State is not immoral in

permitting a grasping landlord to force the sale of a poor woman's furniture in order that he may obtain the rent legally due to him, we need not be surprised if its international relations are not subject to precisely the same moral judgments which we pass on individual conduct.

1. Take, first, the simplest case: a war waged by a nation in self-defence. Hateful as war in all its forms is to the best feelings of humanity, why is it regarded in such a case by almost all Christians as justifiable? On the ground that a nation, like an individual, has a right to protection from violence, and that, unlike an individual, it has no tribunal to which it can look to vindicate its right. The injured citizen has no call to resist force by force. He has only to resort to a legal court, and it will provide the security he seeks But the State, when assailed by a neighbour, has no such recognised and constituted authority to appeal to: unless it is willing to submit to injustice, it has to champion its own cause. Whatever horrors war may involve, it is entitled to have recourse to it in the maintenance of its freedom or its possessions; to refuse to do so would be to decline a primary duty. To fight may be for it as legitimate as for the individual to claim the protection of the law. The same problem of self-preservation exists in both cases; the only difference is that in the one instance circumstances supply a solution which

is easy and orderly, in the other instance they do not.

2. But when people denounce war as iniquitous, they are thinking of the action of the aggressor in the conflict. Yet here again a distinction has to be drawn between the individual and the State. In the life of both there is an instinct for expansion as well as for self-preservation: a demand for wider scope, for larger opportunities of energy and influence. But up to a certain point the lines within which expansion is permissible for the individual are definitely fixed. The law makes plain to him the difference between *meum* and *tuum*. He knows that what belongs to another belongs to him absolutely, and that he has no right to take it from him by force. So far as the relations of man and man go, and apart from what the State may do in abnormal circumstances, personal property is inalienable except by the will of the possessor. But this cannot be said of the possessions of a nation in the same sense. States are not permanent things: they grow, they decay. Deep racial forces tending both to their destruction and their reconstruction are ever in operation. There is a ceaseless movement going on in humanity which, unconsciously but effectively, works for the rearrangement of political boundaries. The existing lines of demarcation between two States may once have been the best practicable, but may now have

become largely artificial; they may be keeping apart people who are made to be together, or binding those who cannot possibly be fused in one. Affinities of blood, language, or religion are elemental factors in determining the courses of mankind, and these may make it impossible for nations to remain content with the demarcation at present drawn between them. Some political readjustment is necessary, if the deep-seated natural capacities and tendencies of masses of men are not to be suppressed or hampered. Nature in the end must have her way: and as no nation will peacefully consent to the contraction of her area, as it is in a manner her duty to resist in self-defence, war becomes inevitable.

Whether, and how far, the nominal aggressor is morally at fault is a question which cannot be abstractly determined. Each case has to be examined and pronounced upon by itself. With the individual offender it is otherwise. Under no circumstances is he warranted in laying violent hands on his neighbour's property. However grossly incapable his neighbour may be of making a good use of it, he has no title to filch it from him. If, indeed, he is a sufferer through the other's misuse of it, he can have redress by invoking the legal authority: but in no case, even where he would undoubtedly employ it to better purpose, can the property become his. But a

State is not confronted with an equally simple problem. Suppose that a Christian nation lies contiguous to a Mohammedan Power; and that the latter has among its subjects clans and tribes which are ethnically and religiously akin to the former, and which partly for this reason it governs oppressively. Would anyone say that the Christian State, in waging war and annexing *at their request* or *with their consent* these subject populations which have an affinity with its own people, was as much guilty of robbery as the man who picks another's pocket? Such a judgment would be the pedantry of morals. For a government holds no indefeasible right in its subjects. The authority which it now has over them has been won by supplanting other governments which preceded it. Perhaps it deserved its victory, and introduced a better system than they could provide. But whether this be so or not, it would be absurd for it, knowing the means whereby it acquired possession, to say, 'Finality has now been reached: let us all agree to maintain the *status quo*.' There is no such finality in human history. The causes which led to such a State's triumph over its predecessor have not ceased to operate, and may as legitimately lead to its own supersession by a government more adapted to the new age.

And just because there is this perpetual change in the vital elements of human life, necessitating

new political combinations, it is impossible in a nation's actions sharply to distinguish between what springs from the principle of self-preservation, and what from the principle of expansion. The two are inextricably interblended. What seems at times to be aggression may be quite as truly a movement in self-defence. A nation honestly believes that its neighbour is bent on its humiliation, and that sooner or later a war is sure to break out; it sees that every month of postponement tends to imperil its chances of successful resistance; and so it plunges into a conflict lest the opportunity of saving itself should go by. No doubt such a plea has to be watched with extreme suspicion, as it can readily be made, and has often been made, to cover atrocious designs. But the fact that there are cases where it might be rightly urged shows the complexity of international ethics. The State which is drawn into a struggle merely by a desire to secure some national boundary-line for its protection, comes out of it with increased territory. In order to keep what it has, it has to follow a course which results in giving it more. Thus no exact distinction can be made between acts of self-preservation which are legitimate, and acts of expansion which are unlawful. And this arises simply from the fact that a nation has not, like a person, rights practically inalienable and easily defined.

3. That whole part of Christ's teaching which bears on passive virtue, forgiveness, generosity, has only a modified application to a State's action. This can best be made clear by asking in what sense it should guide the decisions of a statesman who is himself a true Christian. He may be convinced that his nation has acted unrighteously in its policy towards another, that either under his own auspices or those of his predecessor it has been guilty of some unwarrantable aggression which yet the injured party is in no position to avenge. Is he to reverse the policy, or to offer any reparation or apology? That is what he would do as an individual, in any question between man and man. He would frankly admit his blunder and take the consequences; and he would do it without dubiety or reluctance. But as a statesman, he is not a mere individual. He is the personification of the State in its relation to other States. Now the State has among its functions that of retribution. It has, what no individual has, the right to exercise force both to secure order at home and to uphold its interests and honour abroad. For this end it has at its hand innumerable weapons of offence and defence. Thus the State becomes in men's minds naturally associated with the idea of force. With an army and navy at call, its abstention from using them for the attaining of some object

which might tend to its aggrandisement suggests to many rather a doubt of its power than admiration of its self-restraint. This may easily be the impression which it makes upon a nation not so highly ethicised as itself; and in that case the policy of forbearance would not merely fail of its purpose, but might create greater difficulties in the future.

Further, the statesman is the representative of a people with widely divergent views and interests. Every step that he takes implicates them. Many of them are not animated by the same high motives as he is, would not act in private as he would do, and are still less inclined to follow a generous course where they think that their country's greatness is being imperilled. If he act up to his own convictions and advocate concession, he alienates their sympathy, and probably produces a reaction of feeling which makes the repetition of his generous action in a similar case more unlikely than ever. Now he cannot wholly eliminate such considerations in determining his policy. He cannot disregard the fact that he has to act as trustee for a nation imperfectly Christianised, and in relation to other nations also imperfectly Christianised or possibly barbarous and degraded. But, on the other hand, he has a duty to himself and his own higher conception of the obligations incumbent on the nation whose trustee he is. He is

not warranted in simply humouring its temporary wishes, where he is persuaded they are in conflict with its most vital interests. Moreover, while it may be true that a justly magnanimous act of national policy is apt to be followed by a period of moral reaction and retrogression, especially if the expected practical results are not immediately attained, it is also frequently true that the reaction soon spends itself, and the magnanimous act is approved subsequently by the calmer judgment of the people and constitutes a precedent of lasting ethical value in the national life. Many cross currents and counter claims have thus to be taken account of by the most high-minded statesman in choosing his course. He has to strike a compromise, not merely as a matter of expediency, but as a matter of duty; to do not the best possible, but the best practicable. This is the moral problem of the political ruler.[1] The Christian law applies to him both in his private and his public relations; but in the latter it has to be applied in connection with an infinitely more varied set of circumstances.[2]

The teaching of Christ has a primary reference only to the individual: it can attain its full expres-

[1] Cf. Henry Taylor, *The Statesman*, chap. xvi.

[2] See a suggestive paper by Dr. W. A. Watt on "The Morality of Private and International Action" in the *International Journal of Ethics*, Jan. 1902.

sion only within the sphere of *personal* relations. And the State is not a person except by analogy. It can know nothing of those emotions that belong to the redeemed soul; therefore a whole realm of morality lies outside its range. Nevertheless, just because the nation consists of individuals and has no existence apart from them, its action towards its neighbours is, after its measure, subject to Christ's authority. His teaching is in a true sense its guide, in that it dictates the spirit which at once ennobles and strengthens a State and brings it into right and helpful relations with other peoples. It saps and undermines human selfishness by its view of God and man; it puts the accent on the moral element as that which conditions the prosperity whether of individuals or of nations. It is in the personal and social conduct of the citizens alone that it has free scope; but the more it controls that, the more will it exercise a pervading influence on the policy of the State. That great advances have been made in this direction during the last century is indubitable; and in no particular is this clearer than in the growing consensus of conviction as to the advisability of arbitration. But we have had sufficient proof of the slow progress of international morality to warn us against the indulgence of extravagant hopes. However elevated may be the ethics of the people that constitute a State, their corporate

action as a government can never reach the same moral level, for the simple reason that the State is an institution belonging to the temporal order, is not susceptible to influences and motives that rule in the highest spiritual sphere, and can never by possibility confine itself to purely spiritual methods. When the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, States in the present sense of the word will have ceased to be.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY ON HUMAN DESTINY.

When Jesus appeared He is described as preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. He expounded its nature, the conditions of entrance to it, the character of its members, the privileges it conferred. His teaching was felt to be good news, because it proclaimed a present blessing, joys and consolations which might become the heritage of all receptive hearts here and now. But He always showed a profound consciousness of the imperfect degree in which the kingdom could be realised on earth. So long as the existing mundane conditions prevailed, He saw it struggling with antagonistic forces, not merely as these were embodied in evil-doers, but as operative in the souls of the faithful. And further, His very conception of the relation in which they who were children of the kingdom stood to God, compelled Him to look beyond death's mark. When their earthly term was completed, what then? On every possible ground

He was driven to formulate to Himself and others the outcome of this divine process which it was His mission to inaugurate. Consequently, we find that He speaks with reiterated emphasis on the subject of human destiny. The present order, or the world as it now is, with its mingled good and evil, is to have an end. That end is to be brought about by His coming again in power to judge mankind, not only to separate the righteous from the wicked, but to emancipate and perfect their life. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."[1]

The natural impression produced by Christ's manifold references in the Synoptics to His second coming and the final judgment is that the consummation is to be attained suddenly, and in some passages He seems to declare that it will take place within a generation. His forecast of the future, however, is so penetrated with imaginative symbolism, drawn largely from Jewish prophecy and apocalyptic, that we are compelled to inquire how far we can regard His representations as expressive of His own thought, and how far they are either merely figurative or the result of His hearers' misconception of His meaning. This question is but a part of a larger one, the essential attitude which He took to traditional and contemporary beliefs. *His conception of the End grows out of His fundamental idea of the process*

[1] Matt. xiii. 43.

which leads up to it, and must be construed in that light.

I.

Christ did not originate the expression 'kingdom of God.' He carried it over from the past, and filled it with a new content.[1] His function was not to reveal God *ab initio*, but to complete and crown a revelation already given. Therefore He had to serve Himself heir to inherited and existing forms of thought, in order that through them He might convey higher truth, which would in time create forms adequate to itself. It is this blending of the past with the future, this constant reinterpretation of familiar categories, which makes His teaching at certain points so difficult to grasp. But the general trend of His thought is quite clear; and nowhere is this better exemplified than in the usage of the term 'kingdom of God.' The associations which the phrase suggested to the Jew were those of the victory of Israel as the chosen and righteous people, of the divine glory as manifested in their national greatness and splendour, and of the subjugation or destruction of the Gentile races. Christ threw this whole national reference into the background, and put the accent on the individual as standing in direct relation to God. The kingdom was a kingdom of souls, who had to enter it one by one, and

[1] See Beyschlag, *N.T. Theol.* i. 43.

could only belong to it by virtue of personal qualities of trust, humility, purity, forgiveness, charity. Hence He dwelt so much on the character of its citizens, because that was the best method of expounding the nature of the kingdom itself. Harnack says truly that the teaching of our Lord could be summed up under other categories than the traditional one which He adopted; that it might be equally well set forth under the heading of "God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul," or of "the higher righteousness and the commandment of love."[1] This very fact shows vividly how completely He had broken with prevalent beliefs and expectations, even when He retained the forms in which they were usually expressed. The terminology varies much, but there is no variation in the emphasis which He puts on the heart, the motive, the disposition, as the determining factor in man's life. By asserting the kingdom to be inward and spiritual, He also affirmed its universality; for its distinguishing marks were not Jewish, but human. It demanded nothing from any man but that which every man could give. It related only to what was essential in humanity, and had but two key-words, God and the soul.

From this inwardness of the kingdom spring two facts regarding it which are not only primary in Christ's conception, but distinctive of it: its

[1] Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 51.

reality as a *present* power, and the *gradualness of its growth.*

(1) That He regarded it as already existing may be taken as beyond question. The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of its laws and principles, and these concern human life as it now is. Christ is not describing there an ideal society in the future, out of all relation to the actual condition and experiences of His hearers. He is seeking to quicken in His followers the spirit which would make the divine fellowship a present possession. They are to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness; they are to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth; and His reference to the exposure which at the Last Day will overtake false professors is meant as a warning against neglecting *immediate* obedience to His call. The very least of His disciples, He declares, already enjoys the privileges of the kingdom, and is thus greater than John the Baptist.[1] He tells the Pharisees that His redeeming work in casting out demons is a proof that the kingdom of God is come upon them; and He upbraids them with neither entering the kingdom themselves nor permitting others to do so.[2] The parables teach the same lesson. Even those which are eschatological, like the Tares, the Draught of Fishes, and the Great Supper, have for their presupposition a kingdom of God in the

[1] Matt. xi. 11. [2] Matt. xii. 28; xxiii. 13.

midst of earth's imperfection. That which is yet to be complete and triumphant is in the making here and now. The future is correlated to the present. Except men receive the kingdom of God as little children, they shall not participate in its final glory.[1] Nor are there any sayings attributed to our Lord which bear more clearly the mark of genuineness than those which declare, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; the kingdom of God is in your midst (or within you).[2]

(2) Quite as notable is the distinct recognition of the *gradual* progress of the kingdom. It is a process which advances from stage to stage, and only slowly reaches its culmination. Christ compares it to the growth of corn: "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." And this development is represented in a twofold aspect: it is extensive, expanding like the mustard-seed to a wide-spreading greatness out of all proportion to its small beginnings: it is intensive, penetrating like the leaven to every particle of the mass in which it is inserted, and transforming and moulding the whole life of the individual and the community.[3] The parabolic form in which the idea is cast adds to, rather than

[1] Mark x. 15.

[2] Luke xvii. 20, 21. Whichever rendering we give to the phrase ἐντὸς ὑμῶν, the same idea is involved of the kingdom as an already existing fact.

[3] Matt. xiii. 31, 33.

detracts from, its significance. For the parables are in many respects the most characteristic utterances of Christ. They are His typical method of instruction, and are peculiar to Himself. Being stories or pictures, they have an impressive unity which made them memorable to those who heard them. They clung to the mind as a whole, and had to be reproduced, if at all, substantially as they were spoken. Hence the question of subsequent modification or interpolation touches them less than almost any other part of Christ's teaching. Moreover, the parables of outward nature, like the Sower, the Seed growing secretly, the Mustard-seed, the Leaven, have an especial stamp of originality, in that they are the expression of His own individual thought, uncoloured by those suggestions from Jewish traditional belief which to some degree affect the parables that portray the final judgment. They give us His personal outlook on the spiritual world, and the parallels to its processes that He found in the natural sphere. In reading them we say, Whatever other things He may have thought about the kingdom of God, He at least thought this.

The same idea of growth is plainly set forth in Christ's anticipation that the kingdom of God will yet extend far beyond the limits of the Jewish race. His own ministry indeed was restricted to the Jews; and in sending forth the Twelve on

their evangelistic mission He charged them not to go into the way of the Gentiles, but rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.[1] His action in this respect showed His consciousness of the profound affiliation of His own message and work to the Old Testament revelation. He was Himself the child of Israel, to whom pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises";[2] and His function was to complete that disclosure of the divine character and purpose which had already been carried on through long generations. If, then, His teaching was of necessity so intimately correlated to a divine past, He could only establish the correlation by addressing Himself to those who knew and reverenced the revelation in the law and the prophets which He presupposed and 'fulfilled.' And further: not merely were the Jews the only people who possessed this needed preparation for the receiving of His message, but the very fact that God had elected them to such a unique place in His service in bygone ages indicated that He would still through them in an especial way manifest His glory. Ancient prophets and psalmists beheld in vision a time when all nations should attain through Israel to the knowledge of the true God.[3]

[1] Matt. x. 5, 6. [2] Rom. ix. 4.

[3] Mic. iv. 1–3; Jer. iii. 17; Isa. xlix.–lv. *passim*, lx.; Ps. xxii. 27, 28; lxxxiv. 7.

But that day would only come when she herself was so clothed in the beauty of holiness that others seeing her would desire to share her faith. Whether Christ at the beginning of His ministry adopted this prophetic conception of the method whereby His Gospel was to triumph and expected for it a comparatively speedy acceptance by the Jewish people, or whether He anticipated from the first His rejection and death,[1] He always recognised that it was primarily to the Jews that His appeal must be made, and that they whom God had so highly honoured must first be afforded the opportunity of welcoming or declining the divine call.

Consequently it is in the highest degree natural that the clearest intimations of the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles should be reserved till the hostile attitude of the Jews had declared itself. In that connection they are recurrent and emphatic. The judgment which is to overtake the Jews for their unbelief is in Christ's eyes only the prelude to the passing over to others of the despised blessing. "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' Although those first invited to the Marriage Feast refuse to come, it will not lack guests; they shall be brought in from the highways.[2]

[1] This point is discussed in my *Christ of History and of Experience*, pp. 99–104.

[2] Matt. xxi. 43; xxii. 8–10.

The children of the kingdom shall be cast out: but many shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.[1] But while this thought of the ingathering of non-Israelite peoples finds its chief expression towards the close of Christ's life and as a pendant to the warning prophecies regarding Jewish unfaithfulness, yet the records plainly show that it was then no new idea to Him. In Matthew's Gospel the statement about many coming from the east and west is associated with the healing of the Centurion's servant, which belongs to a comparatively early period in the ministry. The Centurion was not a Jew by birth, but a proselyte. That such a man should exhibit a faith greater than that of the true-born Israelites cannot but have brought up before Christ's mind a whole world of hidden spiritual possibilities in humanity. In like manner, while the interview with the Syro-Phœnician woman sets forth the Jewish restriction which He felt to attach to His personal mission, can anyone imagine that He who realised so deeply the marvel of her faith could have failed to perceive in her a type of far-reaching religious significance?[2] So far is it from being the case that His outlook on the future was bounded by the confines of Judaism, that one of His favourite thoughts is just the

[1] Matt. viii. 11, 12; cf. Luke xiii. 28, 29.
[2] Matt. xv. 28.

treasure of good that lies beyond it. Of the ten lepers, the only one that returned to give God thanks for his recovery was a Samaritan. It is no member of the 'chosen race,' either priest or Levite, but a heretic and alien, who has become for all time, through the parable of the Good Samaritan, the symbol and exemplar of practical religion.[1] How much Christ's mind dwelt on the other sheep not of the Jewish fold is obvious from His references in the synagogue of Nazareth to Elijah's visit to the widow of Sarephath and to Elisha's cure of Naaman the Syrian.[2] He saw in the men of Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah, and in the Queen of the South who travelled far in her eagerness to hear the wisdom of Solomon, a susceptibility to divine messages which was lacking in Israel; and He declared that Tyre and Sidon, had they beheld His mighty works, would not have steeled their hearts against Him like Chorazin and Bethsaida.[3]

The conclusion to which these utterances point is enormously reinforced by every consideration of inherent probability. One of the chief glories of the post-Exilic prophets is their picture of the latter days when the light of Israel shall gladden all peoples.[4] Multitudes of passages set forth this confident hope of the universal reign of

[1] Luke xvii. 12; x. 30–37. [2] Luke iv. 25–27.
[3] Matt. xii. 41, 42; xi. 21.
[4] See Charles, *Eschatology*, pp. 107–114.

righteousness on the earth; and in none is it more nobly expressed than in the prophecies of the Second Isaiah, and especially in the "Songs of the Servant," which we know imprinted themselves so deeply on the heart and imagination of Christ. Is it credible that these ancient singers had a larger and truer conception of the Messianic kingdom than He Himself had; that He fell away from their world-wide vision of its destinies to the older and particularistic Jewish idea? On the contrary, the differentiating note of all His thought is just His emancipation of familiar Jewish terms from their national or particularistic meaning, His insistence on that which is inward and spiritual, and therefore at once both most individual and most universal. If the attitude of the heart toward God and not any external tradition or ceremonial usage was for Christ the one determining factor in religion, then any essential and permanent distinction between Jew and Gentile was swept away at one stroke, and no human soul could be regarded as incapable of rising, under the requisite educational conditions, to the highest privileges of the divine fellowship. To maintain, as Weiss [1] does, that the relation of the Gentiles to the kingdom had in itself little or no interest for Him, that He spoke of its extension to them merely because He found Himself rejected

[1] B. Weiss, *Life of Christ*, vol. iii. 414; *Introd. to the N. Test.* vol. i. 166.

by His own people, and pretty much as a 'prophetic threat' to bring the Jews if possible to repentance and obedience, is simply to turn Christ's personality into an insoluble riddle. No quotation of isolated sayings can make it conceivable that, at any period of His ministry, He should have been in this particular not only irresponsive to the noblest inspirations of the prophetic past, but blind to the obvious implications of His own fundamental view of God and man.

But the expansion of the kingdom to far-off nations meant something different for Christ, as regards its *method*, from the signification attached to it in the prophetic forecasts. The Jewish prophets expected that the kingdom would achieve its realisation in this world, and that its consummation would follow immediately on its establishment at the coming of the Messiah. The manifestation of God's glory in a righteous Israel would draw the wondering nations, so that they would joyfully own their allegiance to Israel's Lord. Christ placed the triumph of the kingdom in the hereafter, when the present earthly order shall have passed away. He never looked for the consummation under existing mundane conditions. "The harvest is the end of the world." But what is reaped in harvest has been sown long before; and the present life is the sowing time. This is indubitably the constant presupposition

of all Christ's action and utterance, of His invitations, His warnings as to neglected opportunities, His promises to the faithful. And it is to the *individual* that He addresses them, not to the nation. The inestimable value of the single soul, and the inalienable responsibility resting upon it, are controlling thoughts in every appeal He makes. Each hearer has to respond for himself. The seed of the Gospel is scattered broadcast, but only they who receive it into an honest and good heart will bring forth fruit to God. This is the manner in which the kingdom is to extend; men enter it one by one. The same conditions of *personal* appropriation which applied to those first bidden to the Marriage Feast, applied to the outcasts of the highways. But as the divine invitation went abroad, Christ anticipated its welcome in ever-widening circles.

There are many who deny that Christ had any such conception of the kingdom as destined to undergo a gradual growth in the world; who contend that in assigning it to Him, we are attributing to Him our modern ideas of evolution and divine immanence, while His own view was that of the divine transcendence, and of the coming of the kingdom as due simply to the miraculous interposition of God.[1] Now much

[1] Wernle, *Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. i. pp. 61–66; Joh. Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, where this position is elaborately maintained (2nd ed. pp. 72, 83 f., *et passim*).

depends on what we mean by the 'modern idea of evolution.' If it signifies that human society is an organism which develops according to *inherent natural* laws, it may be frankly admitted that that was not Christ's idea. He never thought of the life of humanity as merely natural, it was also supernatural. Or rather, as such terms are foreign to Christ's usage, He never conceived of the human as something so separated from the divine that it moved on by virtue of forces native to itself; it was perpetually in touch with God, and at any moment might enter into such fellowship with Him that it became strong with His strength. Therefore it was always open to men to acquire fresh and surprising accessions of moral and spiritual power; and because of this, both individuals and communities might take a swift stride forward in the knowledge and service of God. There was no 'law' imposed on man whereby his growth in goodness must necessarily be slow. Christ believed in the possibility of sudden conversions: but He saw also that 'conversion' had its human factor as well as its divine, and that the mighty works of God might be rendered impossible by man's perverseness or unbelief. Hence the *detailed* course of the kingdom in the world was an inscrutable thing: the influences that determined it were infinitely complex. At one time it might advance by leaps and bounds, and nations be born in a day; at

another it might suffer painful arrest and retrogression. But its trend was one of progress. The leaven would spread.

Christ's attitude towards the miraculous was wide as the poles from that prevailing around Him. The popular demand that He should demonstrate His authority by some 'sign from heaven,' some physical marvel, was not only resisted by Him, but met with a withering rebuke.[1] He did not work His miracles to astonish men or specifically to prove His Messiahship; they were the natural expression of the divine spirit of love and mercy which dwelt in Him.[2] Their function was to interpret and illuminate His message of divine grace. They carried their highest value just in so far as they revealed to others God's perpetual presence in the world and His will and power to help. Their significance consisted in this, that they were exceptional and arresting manifestations of a grace, which in its operation was universal, and which it lay with men to appropriate and in their measure to manifest to their brethren. Now the Jewish apocalyptic hope which represented the kingdom as appearing full grown, like Pallas from the head of Zeus, sprang from the false notion of the miraculous as God's chosen method of work-

[1] Matt. xii. 38 ff.; Luke xi. 16 ff.

[2] Dods, *The Bible: its Origin and Nature*, pp. 226 ff.; Sanday, Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, ii. 626.

ing, which Christ strove to correct; it depicted the consummation as so entirely due to the immediate fiat of God that the present was largely denuded of its ethical value, as implying hardly any other obligation than that of expectancy of the final issue. Christ would not have the present life thus cheapened or dwarfed. If a man could know God and realise His presence anywhere, he could do it here and now: if he would not by faith, humility and self-discipline enter into the divine fellowship now, no change of outward condition hereafter would secure it for him; and the intervention of God would mean not his deliverance but his condemnation. The kingdom, as Christ conceives it, is something which is involved in every day's impulses, acts, and aspirations; it is the one meaning of human life. And so it does not come by arbitrary authority, but through the co-operation of God and man, stage by stage, with many arrests and reverses in its onward march. This thought of a gradual development could have arisen from nothing but Christ's own consciousness; it was His own reading of human experience and of the ways of God with men. Hardly a trace of it exists in preceding Jewish literature; and assuredly it had no place in the minds of His contemporaries. It was His direct testimony as to the kingdom, which to Him was an ethical and spiritual

reality, the presence of God in humanity; and to leave this out is to deny to Him what is most distinctive in His teaching.

II.

But while Christ conceived of the kingdom as a process, it was always as a process which was to reach a definite completion. The triumphant consummation of it appears in half His parables; it is the presupposition of the value which He sets upon the soul, and of the promises and warnings that accompany His message. Nay, it is involved in His whole conception of God and of God's relation to man. Nothing could be further from His standpoint than the view of some modern philosophic schools that evil is a necessary stage in the evolution of good, an abiding element in the moral experience of a finite spirit. To Him it was essentially the thing *which ought not to be*; its very existence in humanity was an intrusion and a contradiction: and just because God was God, its ultimate expulsion was inevitable. That the kingdom of righteousness should be so continually hampered and thwarted as it is on earth, was a sure mark of a provisional and probationary state. The tares and wheat grow together, but only till the harvest; and "the

harvest is the end of the world." This does not mean that men are not here and now subject to the judicial action of God's government. The disused talent becomes lost: increase of spiritual vision is the fruit of obedience, and "to him that hath shall be given." No one has ever spoken with such incisiveness as Christ Himself on the certainty with which the good and evil of human character work out by a necessary law their respective rewards and penalties in the enrichment or impoverishment of the soul. All the activities of a moral being pass judgment as it were on themselves. Yet, even in this inner personal sphere, how far short the judgment falls of the demands of the moral consciousness. Every righteous deed brings as its reward an enlarged capacity of doing good, but it does not bring in the same proportion inward peace and satisfaction. For as a man rises in moral attainment, his ideal of duty widens; the better he grows, the more the unscaled heights of virtue that gradually disclose themselves to his eye dwarf into insignificance his past achievements. The remembrance of some unkind word into which he has been betrayed will cause the saint more grief than the recollection of a deliberate lie or treachery will inflict on the reprobate. On the other hand, the decreased capacity for good which is the punishment of evil-doing means lessened sensi-

tiveness to what duty is, and a feebler self-reproach attendant on every successive sin. The penalty, that is, is one of loss, not of pain; and the "greatest criminal has the completest immunity from inward retribution." Could facts more plainly say, *Respice finem*?

And when we pass from the realm of inward experience to the outward sphere of man's lot or circumstances, the supremacy of morality remains equally unvindicated. Sin brings suffering, but goodness brings suffering too. The martyr to truth has often to endure worse agonies than his oppressor: and worldly shrewdness has an incomparably better chance of a comfortable and prosperous career than exceptional unselfishness. It is true, indeed, that when we take a purview of humanity on a large scale, we see that injustice is defeated in the end. Give time enough, and right gains the victory. Civilisation triumphs over barbarism; the great causes of liberty and brotherhood make way against tyranny and hatred. But the movement is slow; and in the process the individual is sacrificed; his life's blood is the seed of a better time. Multitudes of heroic souls are doomed to darkness and depression ere the morning come. Not only so, but the morning, when it does come, is never so bright as the eager hope of the faithful pictured it. The clouds gather again. The very boon that has been gained bears in its train dangers

that were unforeseen; the freedom of speech and action which thousands have toiled and bled to secure, sets in motion forces that are perilous to human well-being. And so the battle begins anew in another part of the field. The moral development of humanity never is, and never can be, a continuous growth in good. A new generation does not simply start where its predecessor left off, and move forward along the same line of moral conviction. It has its own point of view, and may regard with little favour the lofty ideals it has inherited. Its leading personalities, whether writers or statesmen, may be men of a low ethical type, and by their potent influence create new social corruptions. Just as a Commodus succeeded to a Marcus Aurelius, so there is always a possibility that the good already achieved may be followed by a disastrous reaction. Therefore at the best the aspect which the life of man presents is that of a moral process in which righteousness tends more and more to vindicate its authority on the whole, but with continual interruptions and reverses, striving towards a goal which under existing conditions it cannot reach. If, to use Schiller's famous phrase, "the history of the world is the judgment of the world," then the judgment is radically inadequate; it does no justice to the moral claims of the individual; it leaves God Himself in the position of a struggling combatant.

When Christ, then, solemnly asserts a final and definitive judgment, He is not, as some argue, "putting an arbitrary term to the course of history"; He is only affirming what history as a moral process itself necessitates.[1] For its verdicts show both that righteousness ought to rule, and that it never succeeds in ruling as it ought; and so, if they have any rational meaning at all, they imply a forecast of a time when the contradiction shall be resolved, and the ideal and actual shall be reconciled.[2] And just as certainly is this implied in the very idea of God as Father, which lies at the heart of all Christ's teaching. It is impossible to retain the faith in God's fatherly relation to men, if any soul is finally deprived of what is ethically its due. Nor is it possible to believe in a divine government of mankind if its purposes are continually, whether in greater or lesser measure, to be frustrated. The same consciousness which assured Christ that He came to establish the kingdom of God

[1] "This great and final judgment can only be anticipated now in apocalyptic vision, because it involves the termination of the present dispensation of things; but its coming is so certain that, even if revelation did not foretell it, the thought of it must be postulated in order to give earnestness and reality to any true idea of a moral Teleology of the world." Martensen, *Dogmatics*, p. 466; cf. Denney, *Studies in Theology*, p. 240.

[2] Martineau puts this excellently: "If Death gives final discharge alike to the sinner and the saint, we are warranted in saying that Conscience has told more lies than it has ever called to their account." *A Study of Religion*, vol. ii. 388.

in humanity, assured Him also that the kingdom was destined one day to attain its consummation. These two convictions formed one inseparable whole.

If the End was thus for Him a certainty, it was no less a certainty that He Himself was the appointed instrument for realising it. His abiding sense of perfect sonship was the basis of His Messianic claim to be both the founder of the kingdom and the centre of its security and continuous life. But He who by the Father's will was its author could not be other than its finisher likewise. His presence conditioned it, and so its ultimate triumph was only possible through the completed manifestation of what He was, which would be the judgment of humanity, the revelation to souls of the realities of their character and destiny. The great apocalyptic declarations concerning the personal return of the Son of Man verify themselves; they are but the expression of this truth, according to His wont, in prophetic language familiar and consecrated. That the forms in which He clothes His thought are so largely pictorial must not be allowed to blind us to the essential fact that underlies them, His absolute conviction of His central place in the final realisation of God's redeeming purpose.

When we consider what that realisation means, it need not surprise us that Christ should repre-

sent it as coming suddenly, "at the last day." If in the perfected kingdom "one will alone is loved and only one is done," this involves far more than the deliverance of the righteous from the hampering external conditions of their earthly struggle; it requires the entire renewal of their inward being, its emancipation from every element of inhering sin. Knowing as we do from painful experience in this world that increasing goodness does not eliminate, but deepens the consciousness of sin, how can any prolongation of our spiritual development issue in a sinless service of the Father? If we are really to believe in a consummation worthy of God, we must conceive of it as accomplished by a supreme manifestation of His redeeming grace, whereby the righteous are not simply rewarded according to their works, but are made meet as the blessed of the Father for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is thus that Christ presents it to us: that there is a point in the future at which, without any doubt, the power of the Holy Love will "come full in play,"[1] and that this revelation of glory will be mediated through Him who on earth was the revealer of God's grace. Of course in speaking of the last day we are using a temporal expression for an unspeakable and timeless reality. But we are not likely to make a nearer approximation in our conception of the goal awaiting humanity

[1] See Browning's poem, *Reverie.*

than He did, who from His unique relation to the Father could read better than we the character of the divine purpose and the moral possibilities of men.[1]

III.

Yet though affirming with emphasis the certainty of the End, Christ asserts explicitly His ignorance of the time. "Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven,

[1] Mr. F. W. H. Myers speaks of "that old and just gravamen against almost all theological paradises—that they provide for joy but not for progress. They are abodes of unchanging bliss, dimly felt to be unsatisfactory, though attractive in comparison with the briefer pleasures which man's common life affords" (*Science and a Future Life*, p. 187). But to speak of "unchanging bliss" is not adequately to describe the consummated kingdom of the Father, as Christ conceives of it: the words have too much the flavour of *dolce far niente*. It is not happiness which is its primary characteristic, but holy living; *i.e.* heaven is a state where God's will is done, and because "the perfected spirits of the just" do His will, happiness is theirs. It comes to them hereafter by the same law according to which it comes to men here—through the fulfilment of duty. Their bliss is but the crown of a flawless service. On the forms which that service will assume Christ says nothing; but He implies that they will be as diversified as the varieties of personality. The manifoldness of human individuality, the differentiation of capacity, will remain (cf. Matt. xxv. 14–30; Luke xix. 12–27). To say that the elimination of sin will make life colourless and uninteresting because robbed of the stimulus of warfare, is to contradict our highest moral consciousness. The eager activities of the faithful in this world are not called forth merely by antagonism to evil. In the best souls they are inspired by the passion for a larger appropriation of the divine life, and this becomes more and more the animating motive as a man deepens in spirituality. Thus even on earth we have some adumbration of a devotion to the One Good Will that knows no weariness or limit.

neither the Son, but the Father."[1] This is precisely one of the sayings of whose genuineness there can be no question. It would never have been attributed to Him, had He not spoken it Himself; for it ran counter to all the current views of what might be expected of the Messiah. But it is strictly in harmony with Christ's invariable attitude toward the Father as the Lord of heaven and earth. He alone knows the Father and dwells in undisturbed communion with Him. He is the chosen organ for the realisation of the divine kingdom among men, and thus has the clearest insight into its nature, its implications, and its issue. None the less He lives by faith, not by sight: never acts as one who foresees all the events that to-morrow will bring, but as one who looks forward with fearless confidence, assured that whatsoever is right the Father will give. His own life from first to last is penetrated with the spirit of the psalmist, "My times are in Thy hand"; and the same thought governs His outlook on the world as a whole. The question whether there is ever to be a definite consummation of the kingdom belongs to a totally different order of truth from the question as to the time of its occurrence. The former belongs to the spiritual order, and depends for its solution on the depth and clearness of spiritual insight: the latter belongs to the temporal order of outward facts,

[1] Mark xiii. 32.

and a right answer to it implies that omniscience regarding the detailed course of man's future history to which Christ lays no claim. He bows submissively to the appointments of God's providence; is profoundly conscious of the mystery of its operations, of the way in which the Divine Spirit in its labour towards the goal bears with men's perverseness and tarries their time, of the complexity of the elements that determine the sudden triumphs of God's cause and its equally surprising reverses; and is well content to leave all this in the Father's keeping. No words could better represent Christ's standpoint on such matters than those recorded as a post-Resurrection utterance in reply to the question whether the victory of the kingdom was nigh at hand: "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority."[1] The revelation with which He was entrusted as the incarnate Son, and which contained all that was necessary for men's salvation, did not include a disclosure either of the various stages, or of the duration, of the process which would intervene before the end.

But if He thus expressly disavowed knowledge of the time of His second coming, how are we to account for the fact that He is portrayed in the Gospels as prophesying the consummation within the lifetime of the current generation? "Verily I

[1] Acts i. 7.

say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power," or as St. Matthew phrases it, "till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."[1] Again, "Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come."[2] And again, in the very heart of a passage descriptive of the Last Day or of the signs that prelude it, "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished."[3] There can be no doubt that these sayings were understood by the Apostles as signifying the early return of the Lord to judgment, and that this expectation was practically universal in the first days of the Church.

Now it has been already pointed out that one of the characteristics of Jesus' teaching is the manner in which He takes traditional expressions and fills them with a new content; and in no particular is this more pronounced than in His allusions to the day of the Lord or the coming of the kingdom with power. In the parable of the final judgment of the "nations" He declares that "the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him: then shall He sit on the throne of His glory."[4] Clearly this is an

[1] Mark ix. 1: cf. Matt. xvi. 28.
[2] Matt. x. 23.
[3] Mark xiii. 30: cf. Matt. xxiv. 34.
[4] Matt. xxv. 31, 32: cf. xiii. 41.

eschatological picture; but in His examination before the high priest He repeats the same image with a quite different connotation. "Henceforth," *i.e.* from this time forward, "ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."[1] He means here that the invincible might of His Gospel was about to be manifested. His death, which would take place within a few hours, would be an apparent defeat, but a real victory. It would be followed by the most striking demonstration of the indestructible nature of the truth He proclaimed, and of the impotence of His enemies to arrest its progress. The earlier chapters of Acts record the fulfilment of that prophecy: the fearless confidence of the Apostles in face of the most violent threats and persecution, the eager welcome given to their message by the multitudes among whom the new faith spread like wildfire; and the helpless rage and bewilderment of the Jewish rulers in presence of it all, as of some unaccountable phenomenon. It was a coming of the Son of Man with power, visible in its astonishing results to the eyes of all. "Ye shall see it," Christ says to the high priest.[2]

When we turn to the Fourth Gospel we find

[1] Matt. xxvi. 64.

[2] On Christ's employment of apocalyptic imagery to represent a historical or spiritual event, see Moorhouse, *Teaching of Christ*, pp. 115–118. Compare Peter's application at Pentecost of the words of Joel: Acts ii. 16–21; Joel ii. 28–32.

almost every single eschatological expression more or less spiritualised in the same way. "I will not leave you desolate; I come unto you." "I go away, and I come unto you."[1] That Christ here refers not to a final appearing, but to an indwelling presence in the heart, is clear from the accompanying phrase, "If a man love Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."[2] On the other hand, His assurance to the disciples that there are many mansions in the Father's house, and that He goes to prepare a place for them, and will come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He is there they may be also, carries with it a distinct eschatological suggestion, though the subsequent expression, "I am the way, the truth, and the life,"[3] shows that He is dealing essentially with spiritual experiences which are above time, and which are not to be conceived in terms of here and hereafter. So also the Judgment which the Son of Man executes undergoes a similar transformation in the Fourth Gospel. It is a function which He discharges towards men in this life, not one which is postponed simply till the great assize. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."[4] When the Spirit comes whom He will send from

[1] John xiv. 18, 28.
[2] John xiv. 23.
[3] John xiv. 2, 3, 6.
[4] John xii. 31.

the Father, He will convict the world in respect of judgment.[1] In like manner, the Resurrection is depicted as an inward change, a transformation of soul realised now, instead of a future rising from the grave. Christ calls Martha's thought back from the anticipated deliverance at the last day to the sphere of present experience: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."[2] One feels at once the mystical quality that belongs to such language and the impossibility of fixing it down to any precise definition. But one thing is plain: it speaks not of a delayed, but of an immediate blessing. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."[3] This rendering of judgment and resurrection is not, indeed, the only one in the Johannine presentation; for the last day is dwelt upon as the time when the word spoken by Christ shall judge men, and when the faithful dead shall be raised.[4] But the emphasis lies the other way.

That the Fourth Gospel does not rank with the Synoptics as a historical portrait of Jesus may be frankly admitted. But the Synoptics themselves show, as we have seen, that in one

[1] John xvi. 8.
[2] John xi. 25, 26.
[3] John v. 25.
[4] John v. 28, 29.

classical instance—the interview with the high priest—Christ gave to the strongest apocalyptic expression a present or spiritual application. Nor are they without other indications that agree with the 'inwardness' of the Johannine phraseology: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation": "The kingdom of God is within you": "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"; and if we accept the post-Resurrection utterance as an actual saying of Christ, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[1] It is in every way probable that the spiritualising of eschatological terms was a usage much more frequent with Christ than is represented in the Synoptics, and that the Fourth Gospel has preserved for us many genuine examples of it.

This helps to explain in some measure those passages where He seems to identify the fall of Jerusalem with the end of the world. It is hardly possible for us to exaggerate the significance which Christ attached to the collapse of the Jewish State. Salvation was of the Jews. Of them He Himself came: to them He was sent. He saw in them a special instrument for the realisation of God's gracious purposes, and conscious of His Messianic vocation laboured with concentrated intensity to make them recipients

[1] Luke xvii. 20, 21; Matt. xviii. 20, xxviii. 20.

of the blessing which He mediated, and to which their whole past pointed forward. How unique a place they held in His heart and life is best shown by the poignant grief which their refusal of His call caused Him. Nay, the language which towards the close He addresses to the Pharisees and rulers expresses far more than grief however keen: it is lit up with the fires of moral indignation and antipathy. They are in His sight the betrayers of the cause of God: not only blind, but *wilfully* blind to the teachings of their own ancient prophets; lovers of darkness rather than light; shutting the gates of mercy on the people committed to their charge. On a nation so false to its divine mission the judgment of God would soon fall. The city, so long called holy, and now a haunt of the unclean, would become a desolation, not by any arbitrary visitation, but by the inevitable working of the law of righteousness. Christ's foresight of the destruction of Jerusalem was essentially the verdict of His insight into the forces that operated in the spiritual world. That the Jewish national existence should thus come to a miserable end was from the divine point of view an event of world-wide consequence.[1] It could not but have a unique bearing on the destinies of the kingdom of God among men. Hence the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles, which had been much

[1] Cf. Muirhead, *Eschatology of Jesus*, pp. 134 ff.

in Christ's thought before, rose now more clearly before His vision: the vineyard of the Lord would not be allowed to lie waste because the first husbandmen had been faithless; others would take their place and render to Him the fruits in their seasons. Just because the Jews had rejected the counsel of God against themselves, the way was prepared for Gentile evangelisation.[1] To Christ's eye the downfall of Judaism would be swiftly followed by the notable triumph of the kingdom among other peoples, which would be a veritable coming of the Son of Man with power.

That He spoke of His 'coming' in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem is, therefore, in every way likely: that He did so in the eschatological sense, as reported in Matthew and Mark, thereby making the end of the world almost synchronous with the fall of the Jewish State, is in a high degree improbable. The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew and the thirteenth chapter of Mark, as they stand, present an inextricable tangle of ideas. The Parousia is to come suddenly, unexpectedly; and yet Christ dwells on the unmistakable signs by which the disciples will be able to recognise its approach. He Himself does not know the time of His advent; yet He

[1] Matt. xxii. 1–14, where, as Meyer says, the calling of the Gentiles is represented as coming *after* the destruction of Jerusalem.

says it is to take place within a generation.[1] Contradictions such as these show some grave confusion in the record, and suggest that sayings of Christ uttered on different occasions have been brought together and received a setting which He never gave them.[2] Nor is it difficult to see how the confusion arose. His employment of the phrase 'the coming of the Son of Man with power' to describe any resplendent manifestation of God's presence among men was peculiar to Himself; though it was in entire keeping with His new conception of the kingdom as a spiritual and growing reality in the world. But the disciples did not understand it; they invariably gave to the phrase an eschatological meaning, as was perfectly natural with their ingrained Jewish presuppositions. In view then of His fluent use of the expression, and also of His confession of nescience as to the time of the Parousia, there is every reason to suppose that, in declaring that the disciples would not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man had come, or that

[1] Dr. B. Weiss (*N.T. Theology*, i. 148) argues that there is here no necessary contradiction: that, while Christ knew that the Parousia would be within a generation, He did not know the precise day or hour (or shall we say minute?) when it would take place. Such a view is really unworthy of serious discussion.

[2] Many find a likelier explanation in the hypothesis that a Jewish-Christian apocalypse has been interwoven with the genuine words of Jesus. This solution is advocated in different forms by Wendt, Pfleiderer and others: *vide* Charles, *Eschatology*, pp. 323–330.

some standing by would not taste of death till they saw the kingdom of God come with power, He employed the words in the same sense of a spiritual advent which they bear in His apostrophe to the high priest.[1] I cannot follow Professor Charles when he says, "That Jesus did expect to return during the existing generation is proved beyond question by the universal hopes of the apostolic age."[2] These hopes were the product of that very tendency to take all Christ's allusions to His coming as denoting the Parousia, which accounts for the present form of the Gospel record. The Apostles undoubtedly cherished the expectation; and through them it became dominant in the early Church. But the question is, Did they reflect Christ's own thought on the matter? The Gospels themselves supply us with good reasons for doubt, if not for positive disbelief.

His statement that He did not know the day or hour of His second advent does not imply that He never formed any opinion or impression whether it would be early or late. He cannot but have done so, though conscious all the while that the impression, whatever it was, had not the certainty of knowledge. And it may easily have somewhat varied as new facts and situations

[1] On the different senses in which Christ spoke of His Advent, see Meyer, *Comm. on St. Matthew*, appendix to chap. xxiv.

[2] *Encyclopædia Biblica*, vol. ii. 1373.

disclosed themselves in the providential order. There are distinct hints in some passages that the end may be delayed beyond all human anticipation, and that "an indefinitely long night of history" may intervene before the return of the Lord.[1] He warns His disciples also against false prophecies of His appearing, and excited expectations of it.[2] On the other hand, He warns them equally against any relaxation of prayerfulness or vigilance, against any relapse into disheartenment or hopelessness. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."[3] Are not these diversities of tone and reference precisely what we might look for, if the day of the consummation was hidden from Him? He did not *know* it was to be soon: and so He sought to guard His followers against eager and agitating hopes of its nearness: He did not *know* it was to be late, and so He charged them to beware of presuming on the delay, lest the great hour come upon them unawares. It

[1] Matt. xxiv. 48 (Luke xii. 45), xxv. 19; Mark xiii. 35. That He foresaw the extension of the kingdom to the Gentiles cannot be said conclusively to favour the idea of a late return, partly because we have to take account of the restricted notion of the Gentile world which obtained at that time, and partly because He may have conceived that after His death the epoch-making fall of Judaism would be succeeded at no long interval by the conversion of the Gentiles. But on the whole such an extension of the work of preaching to the nations (ἔθνη) suggests that the Gentile day of grace might be prolonged, as the Jewish one had been.

[2] Mark xiii. 21–23.

[3] Matt. xxiv. 42.

was of primary importance to bear home to them the certainty of His coming, and the urgent necessity of preparedness; and the urgency of His appeal may readily have conveyed to them the thought of immediacy. Seeing that the matter was one which He declared did not fall within the sphere of His knowledge, and was not among the things He was authorised to reveal, there is no *a priori* ground for asserting that He could not have formed a mistaken *impression* of the nearness of the event. To assert this is really to say that Christ must have known what He affirms He did not know. Though more than a prophet, He thought along prophetic lines. He saw with penetrating vision the real significance of moral facts and forces, and the issues to which they led up. But He saw them in no exact temporal perspective, or the relation of far and near. He spoke in the language of time of that which was essentially timeless. But the cumulative evidence in my judgment goes to show that He had no such idea of an immediate return as the Apostles ascribed to Him.

IV.

Christ always identifies the Final Judgment with His coming again at the end of the world. But on what is that judgment to be based? Is it merely on a man's earthly record, and is his

destiny in every case unalterably fixed by the deeds done in the body? To that question Christ gives no such precise answer either affirmative or negative as has been too customary in theological discussion. How does He represent the state into which the soul enters at death? In His dying hour He commends His spirit to the Father, in the full confidence that He is passing into blessedness. His words on the Cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,"[1] promise to the penitent thief an immediate entrance into the same state of felicity in which He Himself will be. The rich man in the parable passes at death into torment, and Lazarus into joy and peace. They are both portrayed as in Hades, the state of the dead; but so far is that state from being conceived as one of probation preparatory to their ultimate destiny, that they are separated by an impassable gulf. The natural implication of the parable is that the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked follow at once on the close of the earthly life; and to ask whether the reference here is not solely to the 'intermediate state,' in our modern use of that phrase, is probably to introduce a distinction which Christ did not intend to make. But it would be just as unwarrantable to treat Christ's picture, even with its suggestion of finality in bliss or suffering, as meant to teach that the fate

[1] Luke xxiii. 43.

of every soul is determined at death. Nowhere in all His teaching does He definitely or expressly say so.

In the absence of any distinct pronouncement by Christ Himself, there are undoubtedly some considerations of a general character which seem to point to the possibility of a future probation. If salvation is only through the acceptance of Christ's Gospel, then neither the heathen millions nor multitudes of people in Christian nations have had in this life the requisite condition of knowledge; and consequently the inference is that such knowledge must be vouchsafed to them in some form prior to the Great Day. But Christ Himself in the parable of the judgment of the heathen indicates a different solution.[1] He represents those who on earth had never heard the Gospel as surprised to discover that their conduct to others was in reality an acceptance or rejection of *Him*. According as they either showed or failed to show compassion or brotherliness, up to the measure of their moral opportunities, they are adjudged as welcoming or despising Him who is the light that lighteth every man. On this view, men under all circumstances do

[1] Matt. xxv. 31–46. I need not repeat here the reasons which I have already given in the *Christ of History and of Experience* (pp. 342–345) for taking the word ἔθνη in ver. 32 as meaning the Gentile nations, or the heathen. For this interpretation see also Bruce, *Kingdom of God*, p. 315; Denney, *Studies in Theology*, p. 243; Charles, *Eschatology*, p. 339.

form for themselves *a type of character* which the Judge of all hearts recognises as decisive of destiny. It might be going too far to affirm that the principle of judgment depicted in this parable is the only or exclusive one; but the fact that it is enunciated so strongly in this instance is a clear warning of the perils that lurk in confident assertions as to the pre-conditions of a *just* judgment. That the destinies of men will be determined on the lines, not only of perfect justice, but of infinite mercy, is an irremovable certainty to those who accept Christ's conception of God. But for us to declare this or that degree of experience or knowledge to be necessary before any decisive judgment can be just, is to stretch ourselves beyond our measure. It is to pronounce a verdict on data that are mostly unknown to us. We *can* say that every man will have an adequate probation: we *cannot* say in face of Christ's parable that no probation is adequate where the Gospel has not been fully proclaimed.

No doubt the very expression 'final judgment' appears to imply that what precedes it is transitional and preparatory. The soul remains disembodied; the establishment of the eternal kingdom is not yet realised. And if this be so, the intermediate state is *ex hypothesi* a temporary and provisional one as distinguished from the permanence and finality of that to which it leads up. Plausible, however, as this argument sounds,

can anyone fail to see how remote it is from Christ's point of view? The contrast in His mind is always between life on earth and life hereafter. The world to come is not divided into two sections, the intermediate and the final. It is *one* world, where the conditions are wholly different from what they are here. Its characteristic is that the issues of the present life, whether for good or evil, are there made plain.[1] Death and the last judgment seem almost to fall into one line of vision, and the interval between them is never clearly emphasised. Hence His language regarding the future carries a varying suggestiveness. Sometimes it rather accords with the possibility of a moral change after death, as when He speaks of one sin which will not be forgiven, "neither in this world nor in that which is to come," as if for other sins there might be forgiveness in the hereafter; or when He declares that some will be beaten with few

[1] Those who advocate a probation extended into the unseen are usually careful to add that it applies only to such as have undergone no sufficient probation in this life (see, *e.g.*, Luckock, *Intermediate State*, chap. xix.). They contend that the destiny of the soul is not *in all cases* fixed at death, that there are those for whom opportunities of grace are still reserved. But can they point to a single passage in our Lord's teaching which declares explicitly that *in any case* destiny is thus unalterably fixed? It seems to me that, if men come to believe that the intermediate state is of such a provisional character that it contains opportunities of grace at all, they will hope, and at least incline to believe, that these may extend to any, and that even the soul unrepentant here is not excluded from them.

stripes, others with many.[1] But in all such cases we can never be sure that we are not reading into the words a greater definiteness of meaning than they were meant to convey. We draw inferences from them which it is extremely dubious that He would have drawn. For example, the appeal of the rich man in Hades on behalf of his five brethren, who, he fears, unless they are specially warned may come to share his torment, strikes a compassionate chord in our hearts; and we ask, Could one capable of an unselfish thought like that be doomed beyond recovery?[2] Yet Christ gives no hint of the possibility of his deliverance, but dwells on the impassable gulf between him and the society of the good. The truth is that when we raise such a question, we are probably quite beside the mark. In all likelihood the appeal of the rich man to Abraham was intended by Christ simply to portray the poignant regret for opportunities irrevocably lost. So also such expressions as "It is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire," or "Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing,"[3] have a penetrative and revealing moral significance, but yield nothing that can be fitted in to an articulated eschatological doctrine.

[1] Matt. xii. 32; Luke xii. 47, 48.
[2] See Charles, *Eschatology*, p. 344. [3] Matt. xviii. 8; v. 26.

There is always a danger that in our eagerness to extract guidance from them on some special problem that preoccupies us, we not only overpress our interpretation, but lose our perspective and undervalue what alone Christ counted central and primary.

For His whole teaching on destiny has for its dominant note the awfulness of the issues with which life on earth is charged. The present hour, the immediate duty, the momentousness of every word and deed—these were what He placed in the forefront. Listlessness in the use of talents entrusted, postponement to a more convenient season, easy reliance on future chances—these were what He consistently rebuked and condemned. If we look at the main lines of His thought, and do not force isolated phrases into a significance not belonging to them, then, though we are not entitled to say that He confined the probation of souls to the present world, we are bound to acknowledge that He did not encourage the thought of its extension into the unseen. May not the reason of His silence have been that this was one of the things, like the day of the consummation, which the Father had "set within His own authority"? In these circumstances it is futile to make much of the two verses in 1 Peter,[1] which most exegetes regard as teaching a ministry of grace in Hades. Even were this

[1] iii. 19; iv. 6.

interpretation of the enigmatic words more certain than it is, there is no indication that this idea was shared by the other Apostles or formed part of the common primitive faith ; and therefore, according to every sound canon of Biblical criticism, it can only rank as a theologoumenon of Peter. Is it at all likely that the Apostle was commissioned to reveal an eschatological truth which was concealed from the Lord Himself, or which He deliberately refrained from proclaiming ? He who believes that Christ's thought had its limitations will not think that Peter's knowledge in such a matter was infallible.

The same method of coloured and varying representation which characterises Christ's references to the state of the soul after death, marks His allusions to other aspects of man's future life ; a method full of spiritual suggestion, but supplying no materials for any co-ordinated or systematic view. So far as one can judge, He shared the prevalent belief in the natural immortality of the soul. Many passages suggest an equal prolongation of existence for the good and the evil. Yet in His reply to the Sadducees' question He contends for the doctrine of the resurrection, or rather of a future life, on lines which apply specifically to the righteous only.[1] That God was the God of the patriarchs signified

[1] Mark xii. 26, 27.

that He had entered into a spiritual relationship with them of such a nature as involved its permanence. He was their God, not only because He had chosen them, but because they had chosen Him by responding to the appeal of His Spirit. In uniting themselves to Him they became partakers of His eternity. The best proof that this free surrender to God is of the essence of the argument is that we could not imagine Christ reasoning thus about a wicked man. Sometimes His words imply the resurrection of just and unjust alike, as preceding the judgment;[1] sometimes the resurrection seems to be only the completion of the felicity of the just.[2] To go to Christ for a minute chart of the Hereafter is totally vain. A few great truths regarding destiny He teaches with authority: that the present life is weighted with unspeakable significance for the life to come; that a final judgment awaits all men; that He himself is both the judge and the standard of judgment; that the end of all will be the establishment of the eternal kingdom of the Father, from which all evil shall be shut out. When we go much beyond these, and strive to construct a detailed theory, we are in danger of wresting His words from their proper intention, and turning poetry into prose.

[1] Matt. v. 29, 30; x. 28; John v. 28, 29.
[2] Mark xii. 26, 27; Matt. xxiv. 31; Luke xiv. 14.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INCARNATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I.

The disinclination on the part of many to admit the idea of any limitation in Christ's thought arises from the false notion that the historical Incarnation was something rounded and complete in itself; when, on the contrary, the revelation there contained had a sequel or supplement of the most vital character, without which it would have been no better than a torso. In speaking thus we are not starting some unheard of novelty; we are simply stating what the New Testament declares; we are occupying the apostolic standpoint. When the Epistles assert that Christ is "all and in all," the First and the Last, the Head of the Church, raised above all principality and power, the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, it is not the historical Jesus to whom they refer, but the risen and reigning Lord.[1] True, He is the same

[1] Cf. Gore, *Dissertations*, p. 202.

person in His state of Incarnation and in that of Exaltation; but it is under the latter aspect, not under the former, that they assign to Him these prerogatives. They claim that there is no limit to the knowledge or sympathy or power to help, of Him who has now taken His seat at the right hand of God. That this plenitude of authority is His in virtue of His incarnate work and sacrifice is their fundamental presupposition. But the Apostles never recall that incarnate period with longing regret that it is theirs no more; rather do they rejoice that it is past, for it has been taken up in all that is permanent of it into the splendour of that victorious life of which He has made them partakers. They find in it indeed the abiding attestation of God's love; but it is all this to them because the Son of God *gave up* so much. It was for Him a time of restriction, of self-limitation, freely undergone: that is its glory. None the less, not till the humiliation had ceased, could the fruits of it be reaped.

When they dwell on this self-surrender of the Lord, their thoughts are more particularly fixed on the Cross: "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "Hereby perceive we love, in that He laid down His life for us."[1] This is the note which is ever recurrent in the apostolic

[1] Rom. v. 8; 1 John iii. 16.

writers, an overwhelming sense of the unparalleled deliverance wrought out for them, and the unparalleled cost at which it has been secured. But nothing could be more mistaken than to suppose that it is the Atonement as an isolated fact which so thrills them with thankful reverence. It appeals to them thus, because it is the culminating point of a sacrifice which began at the moment when the Son was born into our humanity. It is the crowning and final act of redeeming love, but, properly speaking, has no meaning except in relation to what went before it, just as it would have no validity except in relation to the resurrection which followed it. To sever it from its setting in connection not only with the public ministry, but with the entire curriculum of life's discipline which the incarnate Son underwent, to treat it as the solitary manifestation of divine grace to sinners, is to misrepresent the facts as the Apostles knew them. For it is to the Apostles in the last resort that we owe the Gospels; and though the relatively large place assigned there to the last sufferings and death of Christ shows the central emphasis which they put on the Agony and the Cross, yet much the greater part of the record is devoted to Christ's ministry and the portrayal of the life He lived among men. If we wish to realise what the apostolic view was, we have to take account not only of the Epistles, but of the evangelical

history, which was the common possession of the first Christians, and which formed the basis on which the Epistles rested. It is with the full consciousness of all that Jesus was known to have been, that expressions regarding the Father's mercy in not sparing His own Son, but delivering Him up for us all, have to be interpreted.

There is a deceptive impressiveness in the declaration that the one thing which Jesus *did* for us was to bear our sins on Calvary. It has an apostolic sound about it; but the Apostles would have been the last to admit that in their language about Christ's death, they meant in any way to assert that He *did* nothing for us up to that point, or that He was not dealing with the problem of our sin when He went about doing good and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. From first to last the Incarnate One was *doing* something for us which we could not do for ourselves; He was not simply teaching or setting an example, He was founding the kingdom, He was acquiring that divine-human life which for our sakes He laid down. To talk as if it were a matter of indifference for our redemption what preceded the Cross, or whether anything preceded it, is not to reproduce the apostolic message. The prolonged ordeal of human experience to which Christ was subjected, in childhood, youth and manhood, is no negligible

factor in His deliverance of mankind. It is an integral part of the one redemptive achievement.

This is sufficiently obvious when we take the New Testament in its unity, and interpret the separate parts of it in relation to the whole. The prologue of St. John's Gospel sums up the total impression which the facts as the Evangelist afterwards proceeds to relate them make upon him; it gives us his reading of the significance which attaches to Christ's appearance in human history. He is enthralled by the greatness of the boon which Christ conferred, giving to as many as received Him power to become sons of God: he is not less enthralled by the mystery of condescension which alone made this possible. He who brought this inestimable gift of sonship was none other than the Word made flesh, who not only took our humanity upon Him, but dwelt among us. It would be just as rational to infer from the omission in the prologue of all reference to the sacrifice of the Cross that the writer disregarded or disparaged it, as to argue that when St. Paul proclaims that Christ died for our sins he ascribes no redemptive value to the incarnate life as such. There is a common atmosphere which pervades the entire circle of New Testament thought; there is a common faith which is presupposed throughout; whether one or another aspect of

it shall be specially emphasised depends on the particular occasion and purpose. When the death is referred to, it is always as the consummating experience of the Incarnation; when the Incarnation is spoken of, it is always as including the atoning death as its climax and issue. Therefore, while the prologue of the Fourth Gospel makes no allusion to the sacrifice of the Cross, the Gospel itself shows clearly enough that the writer had it in view as the most resplendent proof of the divine grace given by the Word made flesh. But his eye is not specifically on this or that element in the Incarnation, but on the fact itself in its whole range of significance: the voluntary acceptance by the eternal Son of our human condition. This is what subdues and overwhelms him by its marvel.

It is the same wondering reverence which fills the heart of St. Paul at the thought of Him who though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.[1] "Ye know the grace," he says, the unspeakable self-sacrifice which was implied in His assumption of our human life and of all that it meant for Him. It was a step from riches to beggary, from the fulness of an all-comprehending divine life to one restricted to the temporal and local limits of our humanity. An immeasurable gulf separated

[1] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

the two, and He crossed it — *for our sakes.* Even more pronounced is the great passage in Philippians in which the Apostle describes with an unwonted elaboration of detail the stages of Christ's self-surrender: "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name."[1] It is a marvellous picture of the progressive self-abnegation which lay between the surrender and the resumption of the glory that was His by right. And yet though the shame of the Cross is the extremity of the self-denial, St. Paul so expresses himself that of the two steps in the Son's sacrifice of Himself,—the willing acceptance of our hampered life and the sacrificial death which was its closing act,—the former is portrayed as the greater. Each of them, indeed, is beyond all human estimate; but in the one He "emptied Himself," a phrase which in its strange vagueness suggests the very finality of mystery; in the other, being thus self-emptied, He "humbled Himself" even to the ignominy of the crucifixion. It is as if it were said: 'Conceive what He had

[1] Phil. ii. 5–11.

to do before He could give His life a ransom for us; He had to exchange equality with the eternal Father for a condition of human service; He whose presence and power filled all things had to submit Himself to a creaturely existence. He came to redeem us by His blood; but in order to do it, *this* was what He had to endure.' No doubt when we speak thus we are abstractly putting asunder what God has joined; the two stages are inseparable parts of a whole. But the distinction is made by the Apostle himself, and it is needful to emphasise it, in order to expose the falsity of the idea that the self-sacrifice of the Son lay not in His becoming man, but only in His atoning death as man. It is true, as has been said already, that the Apostles do not attempt to analyse psychologically, as we do, what the Incarnation implied "in the region of Christ's personal experience."[1] But they have supplied us with the facts of His life, which if we are to form any conception at all of that experience, indicate the lines along which it must run. If anyone remains unimpressed by the self-surrender of love in the Son's assumption of humanity, if it is only at the Cross and not also at the Manger that he is touched by the sense of adoring awe, it is simply because he does not realise the immensity of the contrast between what the Son of God is and must be in His

[1] *Ante*, p. 87.

absolute being, and what Jesus was as depicted in the Gospels.

This tendency to overlook the self-sacrifice which the Incarnation as such involved has been fostered by the theory so widely advocated in recent days, that the Incarnation was not dependent on the 'contingency' of human sin, but belonged to the primal and absolute purpose of divine love. It cannot be denied that this theory carries a certain plausibility. For the assumption of our nature by the eternal Son did not, according to the Christian conception, terminate with His mortal state; as the Incarnate He rose and ascended, and it is as still in a transcendent sense Son of man that He reigns as Lord, exalted above all principality and power. It may seem, therefore, more satisfying and self-consistent to believe that such a manifestation of the divine self-abnegation in humanity, and such a permanent exaltation of humanity, were part of the original creative thought of God, than that they should have entered into a universe constructed ideally on other lines. In this way the unity of the divine order is conserved: such was the love of God that, while He had always purposed that man should attain his consummation through the Son's Incarnation, yet He did not suffer that purpose to be deflected even when man had sinned, but delivered up His Son to undergo all

that was implied by Incarnation *into a sinful race.*

The cogency of this argument is more apparent than real, for it makes an illegitimate use of what is termed the 'contingency' of human sin. That sin exists through the perversity of man's will, that it is in no sense attributable to the action of God but is a direct defiance of His purpose, is a fundamental affirmation of the Christian consciousness. But while it has thus entered as an intrusion into a world where from the divine standpoint it had no right to be, yet its appearance was no surprise to God. It was never an uncertain thing to Him whether it would or would not desolate humanity. From the first He knew that He would have to deal with it. His redemptive thought was as original as His creative. When we ascribe to Him an ideal conception of the universe from which He started, and which He subsequently modified to meet an emergency caused by human sin, we are using purely pictorial language. The emergency, as we call it, was foreseen; however alien it might be to His purpose, it was taken account of as a part of that universe which He created and which it was His design ultimately to "subdue unto Himself." The Lamb was slain, the Kingdom was prepared for the righteous, "from the foundation of the world."[1] If, then, the redemptive element was

[1] Rev. xiii. 8; Matt. xxv. 34.

inherent in God's eternal thought, and if His entire self-revelation in history has been controlled by that fact, it is futile for us to try to get behind this unity, and to pronounce how far the actual method of His self-revelation would have been altered on the imaginary hypothesis of an ideal creation untainted by sin. We are in an abstract region where there is no safeguard against merely fanciful constructions.

But what concerns us specially here is the effect which such a theory has on our view of Christ's incarnate life. Its confessed aim is to remove the Incarnation from the realm of accident, to show that it belonged to the primal and creative purpose of God towards man. But just in so far as it succeeds in doing so, it inevitably leaves the impression that the Incarnation was a normal development entailing no astounding self-surrender on the part of the divine. Thus the effect which it produces on us is very different from that which it makes when we regard it as the act of God's redeeming grace. This difference in our feeling is due in some degree to an illusion, in that we are apt to think of the creative work of God as necessary, but of His redemptive work as free; when in truth His action in both is equally free and necessary, equally the outcome of His inner self-determining nature. But the difference has a deeper root than this, and is based on

reality. For while God's creative action is as really as His redemptive the expression of His love, it is not from the moral point of view so high a manifestation of it. His forgiveness of the disobedient is a greater revelation of goodness than His beneficence to the faithful. This is so absolutely ; and it is doubly so relatively to us, the sinful. The emotions which are stirred in us by the love which pardons are immeasurably deeper than those evoked by the love which creates, sustains and provides. Therefore, when we associate the Incarnation with the former it kindles a glow in us which it can never awake when we connect it merely with the latter; it predisposes us to perceive in it a mystery of good far outreaching anything that the creative work of God can inspire. It becomes a much more credible thing that the Son of God should have assumed a creaturely form of existence, if we believe that He was made man "for our salvation." There is then some proportion between means and end. But if we divorce the Incarnation from its redemptive reference, our deepest sense of obligation to the divine mercy will gather round the Atonement only; and the Incarnation will cease to impress us as a marvel of self-surrender.

A very curious sentence of Dr. Westcott's shows clearly that the "Gospel of Creation" which he has done so much to popularise tends

inevitably to this result. "I would repeat," he says, "that we must carefully guard the conception of the Incarnation, as we thus endeavour to view it in the absolute Divine Counsel, from every thought of humiliation. We must conceive, if I may so represent the idea, that in that case glorified humanity would have been raised up to heaven, and not that the Son of God would have come down to earth."[1] Is there any definite "idea" at all conveyed by such language? Why does Dr. Westcott shrink from the supposition that the Son would have come down to earth, had the primal purpose of God in creation been realised? Plainly because the assumption of our earthly humanity, even in a sinless state, would have implied on His part an inconceivable self-sacrifice. It is not sin that has subjected man to the limits of space and time, or that has differentiated the human type of thought from the divine. It is of the essence of his nature to be thus conditioned. That the Son should have accepted these limitations, and been born as a child into our race, does not seem to Dr. Westcott probable as a part of the "original plan" of the universe. But in order to exclude the notion of humiliation, he practically discards all that suggests the divine self-renunciation; it is not only the suffering and sorrow which are the result of sin that vanish, but every limitation that is

[1] Westcott, *Epistles of St. John*, 3rd ed. p. 325.

distinctive of human life as we know it. In short, Incarnation in the ordinary meaning of the word disappears altogether. It then means merely that the Son would have worn our humanity in something of the same sense in which the Creed affirms that He wears it now in His exaltation, where, *ex hypothesi*, His human nature in no degree restricts the full activity of all the attributes of His Godhead. Could anything prove more conclusively that, if we assign the Incarnation as such only to the creative purpose of the Father, it no longer appeals to the heart as a supreme manifestation of the divine self-abnegation? Yet Dr. Westcott, by retaining the word and contending that the Son would have become incarnate apart from human sin, fosters the impression that the *actual* Incarnation, with only the suffering and atoning element eliminated, would have taken place according to the creative will of God; and as it does not appear likely to others any more than to Dr. Westcott that the Father in His absolute purpose could have designed the "humiliation" of the Son to the limiting conditions of human thought, they naturally draw the inference that in Christ's case these conditions *were* absent. This theory, that is, by its confused use of the term Incarnation, tends to blind men to the reality and the marvel of the divine "self-emptying" in the assumption of our nature.

II.

There could not be a more explicit recognition of the limitations inherent in the Incarnation than Christ's own words as recorded in the Fourth Gospel, where He speaks of the Comforter whom He will send from the Father.[1] The idea that permeates them is that His departure will enrich, not impoverish, the disciples; and that the cessation of His incarnate state is indispensable to the liberation of His power. He bids them look to the future not as a time to be dreaded, but as an era of triumph. They

[1] It is often asked whether there is any parallel in the Synoptics to the teaching of the Fourth Gospel regarding the Spirit as the abiding representative and interpreter of Christ. There is no direct parallel, but there is much that implies or leads up to it. The two aspects of the truth are both given in the earlier Gospels, but they are not brought into a unity as in the Johannine statement. On the one hand, the Synoptics speak of a permanent indwelling of the Spirit in humanity. "When they shall deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak. . . . For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 19, 20). "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke xi. 13). On the other hand, the perpetual presence of Christ with His disciples, and His identification with them, are clearly emphasised. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20),—a passage which may be a later incorporation in the Gospel, but which has verisimilitude as a saying of Jesus, especially in view of its close resemblance to the verse just quoted. "Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27). See the admirable discussion of the question in Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 216 ff.

would be enabled to accomplish what was now impossible, not only for them, but for Him. Greater works than He wrought they would achieve in His name.[1]

The organ or instrument through whom all this was to be realised was the Holy Spirit. And of the Spirit and His function Christ affirms two things. *First*, His coming is dependent on Christ's own departure. The phrases that describe the source from which the Spirit is to proceed vary: "The Holy Spirit whom the *Father* will send in My name"; "When the Comforter is come, whom *I* will send unto you from the Father"; "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, *I* will send Him unto you."[2] But the thought in all cases remains the same. The Spirit, though derived from the Father as the fount and origin of all, is essentially mediated by the ascended Lord, and thus may be spoken of as the gift of the risen Christ. *Secondly*, His function is to interpret the work of Christ. "He shall not speak from Himself . . . He shall take of Mine and shall declare it unto you."[3] The subject of His teaching is the revelation of God in the Incarnate One, and His mission in regard to it is twofold—(1) to reveal its meaning, by correcting erroneous views and bringing out neglected

[1] John xiv. 12.
[2] John xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7.
[3] John xvi. 13, 14.

elements of truth; and (2) to communicate it as a vital power in men's hearts and lives. And these two sides are both included in Christ's promise: "He shall guide you into all the truth";[1] not only into right conceptions of it, but into the personal experience of it as a living reality.

If it be asked, Why had the historical life of our Lord to close before this illumination and emancipation took place? it is obvious to say that, as His redeeming work only culminated in His death, nay, as it was there alone that He finally put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, the 'truth' in its full sense did not as yet exist. The basis of the reconciliation between God and man was not laid. St. John puts the matter into one brief phrase, "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified."[2] But these words of St. John suggest to us another reason, though it is in a sense involved in that already given: that an earthly life, just because it is such, cannot be a 'glorified' one. So long as Christ was 'in the flesh,' He was limited by its conditions. He was subject to the restrictions of time and space; He was here, not there; with definite relations to the people beside Him which

[1] John xvi. 13; cf. Matt. x. 20, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you"; and Mark xiii. 11, "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."

[2] John vii. 39.

He did not sustain to those outside that circle. The influence also which He exerted over them was of the same type as that which we exercise over one another. It was the effluence of a personality as expressed through the usual physical media of words, acts, and bearing. It is not easy to exaggerate the extent to which a rich and potent individuality can thus mould and direct other minds, stamping them with its own impress. But stretch this magnetism of personality to its utmost, even as it exists in the reflection and idealisation of memory, it is still characteristically different in kind from the indwelling of the Spirit as promised to the disciples, and as afterwards experienced by them. For the Spirit is not a vague influence, but a personal power. He works in and with the soul, quickening, illuminating, consoling. He "helps our infirmity," searches us, can unravel the tangle of our inward life, knows where our special need lies, and can meet it with His infinite reserves of grace. In short, He becomes guarantee for us, because He is separate from us, and yet one with us; He is *in* us, but not *of* us. And this He can do, not for a few, but for all men. Temporal and spatial limits do not exist for Him. There is no barrier to His entrance into the heart, except that created by the refusal of the heart to welcome Him. Wherever there is human receptivity, there His enabling and sanctifying power works

and triumphs. This universality of operation, both intensive and extensive, cannot belong to the divine while clothed and localised in "flesh and blood"; it must be liberated from these bonds before it can attain it. The external factor must disappear, ere the Incarnate can enter into His glory.

Hence it is that Christ represents the bestowal of the Spirit as ushering in a more blessed time for the disciples than they had enjoyed during His outward companionship with them. The Spirit was not to be a pale substitute for Himself, as they had known Him: His coming was Christ's coming, in the highest sense of the word; it was Christ's own presence in the "only mode which could be quite absolutely direct and primary and real,"[1] because the only mode in which He could become a vital source of spiritual strength *in us*, and also adapt Himself to every variety of our personal necessity amid the ever-changing form of circumstance. Neither of these functions could be discharged by Him in the period of His Incarnation. The sundering of outward relations, however intimate, had to precede this inward identification of Christ and the soul of man.

Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since Christ promised that the Spirit would guide His disciples into the truth. If, then, we would

[1] Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 169.

understand what that truth is, or, to put it otherwise, if we would rightly conceive the real character and content of Christ's authority, we must find the answer in the history of the Church. What has been the result of this illumination of the Spirit, and by what method or process has it come?

There can be no doubt that the very centre and heart of the Incarnate revelation, as Christian experience has consistently witnessed from the first, is that in Christ we have a gospel of redemption, that in Him God was reconciling the world unto Himself. This is the fundamental conviction which determines and controls everything else in the Apostles' thought of Him, that He had suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He had thereby brought them to God, and introduced them to a new life of sonship, which was liberated from the condemnation of a guilty past and bore within it the pledge of a free, joyous, and ever-enlarging service of the Father. Here lay the basis of all His authority over them: that He had done for them what none other could do, by restoring them to the gracious privileges of a full divine fellowship. Henceforth they were not their own: they had but one aim, to obey the will of God revealed in Him, to make it prevail in their own lives and in the world at large.

And yet it was just at this point that difficulties

arose for them. What exactly did that "will of God," which He incarnated and disclosed, cover? They had no other desire than to carry out Christ's purpose. He had not only *called* them to a life of communion with God, of purity, brotherly kindness, charity; He had made them *partakers* of it by His Spirit. That was quite clear to them. But what did this new life include? Did it, or did it not, imply the continued observance of Jewish rites and ceremonies? Or, in other words, did He intend them to proclaim the Gospel to any who stood outside the portal of the circumcision, and if so, on what terms? Manifestly the decision of such a matter was of primary importance. It involved the question of the area over which Christianity was to extend; whether it was to be a divine message to humanity, or a national and sectional faith; nay, it really involved, as St. Paul showed with consummate insight, nothing less than the essential character of Christianity itself.

We should naturally say that in such a controversy there was only one obvious solution,—reference to Christ's own definite declarations. But this is precisely the course which the Apostles did not adopt. Paradoxical as it may seem, they never appealed to any specific command of His as determining the question, and yet they claimed to possess His authority. His direct teaching on the matter had not been indis-

putably clear. There were sayings of His which could be adduced on both sides. On the one hand, some of His utterances, such as "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"[1] or His injunction to the Twelve, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles,"[2] at least suggested the restriction of His message to the Jews. And these were apparently reinforced by His own example in practically confining His labours within the Jewish area. On the other hand, far more numerous were the expressions which pointed to the world outside Judaism. "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness." "The Gospel must first be preached unto all the nations."[3] Yet the very manner in which He spoke of outside "nations" (ἔθνη) tended to confirm the idea that the Jews held the prior place, and that it was their unworthiness of God's favour which led, in an indirect and subordinate way, to the admission of the Gentiles. Christ's own teaching, in short, did not yield any conclusive or well-defined pronouncement. For though He had foretold and commanded that the Gospel should be proclaimed to "all the nations," He had said nothing as to whether any con-

[1] Matt. xv. 24. [2] Matt. x. 5.
[3] Matt. viii. 11, 12; Mark xiii. 10.

ditions were to attach to this proclamation; and so we can hardly be surprised that the prevailing feeling among the earliest Christians was to combine both elements as represented in Christ's words and life: to do justice to the universalist side by offering to the Gentiles the blessings of the Gospel, and to the particularist side by conjoining the Gospel with Jewish observances.[1] How came it that the Church very soon discarded the particularist element, and with ever-deepening conviction affirmed the universalist view as the only one which carried with it Christ's authority?

The first outstanding factor in the process was simply the teaching of experience; it was the impression produced by fresh facts disclosed in the course of Providence. Take the record as it stands in the Book of Acts.[2] When Peter was accused by the party of the circumcision of violating the accepted Church order by baptizing the Gentile Cornelius, his defence was a narrative of events which, he claimed, proved his case. He told how he had received a vision that taught him not to refrain from eating meats which God had cleansed; that immediately afterwards three men waited on him in the name of Cornelius, and that the Spirit bade him go with them, "making no distinction." Taking six Jewish brethren with him, he came to Cæsarea; and

[1] *Vide* Charles, *Eschatology*, p. 335. [2] Chaps. x., xi.

while he was in the very act of preaching Jesus to Cornelius and his company, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, as on the Jewish believers at the beginning. They bore the same marks of men who had been filled with a divine power and spoke with tongues. All the extraordinary manifestations of a new spiritual enthusiasm and joy, in which the first Christians traced the sure tokens and gifts of the Spirit, were present in those Gentiles whom Peter addressed. That it was so could be testified by the six brethren as well as by himself. The decision had been taken out of his hands: God had determined the matter: "Who was I, that I could withstand God?" The Apostles and brethren accepted the test laid down by Peter. They cavilled no more; raised no questions as to whether they could vindicate the new departure out of the Master's own words. The ascended Lord had declared His will, *by conferring the Spirit*: it was for them to recognise by the bestowal of baptism the accomplished fact.

Precisely similar is the course followed by the Church in its subsequent acknowledgment of Paul's work among the Gentiles. At the Jerusalem council Paul and Barnabas are first called upon to state their case; and it consists in relating what had actually occurred. When a discussion arose, Peter said, "God which knoweth the heart, bare them (the Gentiles) witness, giving

them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith."[1] And it was because of those "signs and wonders" which God had wrought that the Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church, pronounced against the necessity of circumcision as a condition of entrance to the Christian fellowship.

This throws light on the hypothesis not infrequently advanced in support of some dogma or ecclesiastical usage of the Church that it had, or may have had, its source in the instructions given to the Apostles by the risen Lord during the Forty Days. It sounds plausible to urge that when He was speaking to them of "the things concerning the kingdom of God,"[2] He would most probably give distinct guidance on great questions which would fall shortly to be decided.[3] Yet if we once indulge in these problematical speculations, there is hardly any limit to the extravagances to which they may lead; and the most dubious theories, doctrinal and ecclesiastical, of a later develop-

[1] Acts xv. 8, 9. [2] Acts i. 3.

[3] Dr. Briggs (*New Light on the Life of Jesus*, p. 124) says, "We are justified in the conclusion that we must assign no inconsiderable portion of the teaching of Jesus to His appearances after His resurrection"; and he accounts in this way for the apostolic doctrine on Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Cf. Dr. Denney's guarded statement, *Death of Christ*, pp. 66–70.

ment may in this way be buttressed and guaranteed.[1]

But the apostolic action itself has ruled out this method of explanation. For surely, if there is one point which we should have expected Christ, during the post-Resurrection period of His intercourse with the disciples, to elucidate beyond all controversy, it is the question of the universality of the Gospel which He commissioned them to proclaim. Had there been a single utterance which unambiguously affirmed either the larger or the more restricted view, is it conceivable that it would not have been put forward as the final settlement of the dispute? That He said nothing on so crucial a matter should warn us away from this hypothetical field altogether. It was not by merely reverting to the past, but by keeping their eyes open to the present action of their living Lord, that the

[1] The Bishop of Ripon (Dr. Boyd Carpenter) has some trenchant remarks on this point. "It" (the narrative of the forty days) "is practically one of the Bible silences. This silence is seized upon by doctrinal theorists. Every dogma which they desire to see included in the Christian creed: every practice which they think should be observed in the Christian society: every portion of organisation or order which they imagine to be indispensable to their own theory of Church government: is roundly declared to have been sanctioned by the Lord Himself during this period. That there is not the faintest scintilla of evidence for any of these statements does not appear to distress or to disturb the minds of these eager dogmatists. . . . Against this practice we cannot protest too strongly." *Introduction to the Scriptures* (Temple Bible), pp. 48–50.

Apostles discovered where His authority lay. The certainty of this is not at all affected even if the history of the earliest Christian community as given in Acts be to some degree moulded by a conciliatory tendency, by a desire to minimise the differences of the Petrine and Pauline parties. It may be that, for the purpose of emphasising the unity of the Church, the story of Cornelius attributes too much of a universalist belief to Peter, and that if from the first he stood forth as the champion of Gentile admission, it is not easy to account for his later antagonism to Paul, which is historically indubitable.[1] Yet it is only too common for those who under sudden illumination have risen above inborn prejudices, to pass again under their thrall, when they find that the new conviction they have adopted carries with it astonishing or alarming consequences. Inconsistencies of this kind are the commonplaces of human character. In any case, however far subsequent reflection has modified the order of the incidents or even their precise character, nothing stands out more plainly as a transcript of the reality than that, in the determination of the Gentile problem, the earliest Christians did not ascertain what they believed to be the will of Christ through any explicit instruction from His lips, but through fresh manifestations of His presence in the world. The record has veri-

[1] Gal. ii. 11 ff.

similitude on the face of it. If the risen Christ had committed Himself to the Pauline view of the absolute *equality* of Jew and Gentile, which the Church has since accepted as warranted by His authority, then the disputes of the apostolic age are simply inexplicable.[1]

But while the emergence of new facts, attesting a divine work, was the primary cause of the Apostles' altered conviction, another factor equally important was also in operation : their own growing appreciation of what salvation through Christ implied. They found increasingly that the joy of their new fellowship with God did not spring even in part from any of the observances which they had retained from their Jewish days ; that it centred in Christ and in the powers and hopes which He had assured to them : and that therefore they did not owe to circumcision anything that was distinctive of their life as Christians. Hence it became more and more perplexing to them how to correlate the indispensableness of Jewish rites with that all-sufficiency of Christ to which their deepest experience testified. Paul's argument as to the impossibility of such a correlation was but the intellectual expression of a truth to which their own consciousness dimly pointed. They were instinctively moving in that direction

[1] As Loisy says in speaking of another matter, "Si la croyance avait été très claire dès le début, elle n'aurait pas eu tant de peine à faire son chemin." *Autour d'un Petit Livre*, p. 119.

already, under the compulsion of Gentile conversions. He with his clear vision brought out the *principle* involved in the relation in which they stood to Christ: "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."[1] The deepening sense of the value and adequacy of the Gospel convinced them that to insist on any ritual form as a requisite precondition was simply to destroy it. First came the startling revelation that God was working His miracles of reconciliation outside the barriers which they thought immovable: and then reflection on their own Christian experience showed them that the barriers were a survival from the past and an anachronism in Christianity.

We have here a classical illustration of what is meant by the illumination of the Spirit, and of the methods of His operation. In their whole action the one concern of the Apostles was to be loyal to the purpose of their Master. They had the most vivid recollection of the time when He was with them, and of the teaching that He had imparted to them. But where His word or example was insufficient for present guidance they never doubted that fresh light would break for them. They found the sure indications of His mind through submitting themselves to His discipline of their life. What they had imagined to be primary and essential in His utterances

[1] Gal. vi. 15.

or acts, they now perceived to be subordinate or temporary. They read His declarations with a new accent or emphasis; and they did so confidently, because it was still He who was teaching them by His Spirit. But the Spirit employed means in the conveyance of this teaching. He appealed to them through events which were occurring around them, and which at first appeared very disconcerting to them. Had they not honestly faced these, and allowed them to bear home their own lesson, they would have remained in the old narrow groove. Had they not been willing to be corrected, to unlearn as well as to learn, to be true to their own developing and changing life, the Spirit would have spoken in vain. But they did not permit their surprise at Gentile conversions to blind them to the reality of the *fact*; they did not seek to explain them away by the suggestion, too familiar to us nowadays, that they pertained to "the uncovenanted mercies of God": rather they proceeded to ask whether, if these things were so, their own idea of the "covenant" was wide enough. And in taking up this attitude whereby they laid themselves open to the further truths which God intended to convey, they were vindicated by the results. In labouring for the Gentiles the marvel of their own Christian life growingly verified itself as the power of God, in the expansion of their knowledge and the increase of their

joy. That which began as an outward revelation which they witnessed in other souls became an inward revelation of strength and hope, which was the final guarantee that they had not misconceived the will of their Lord.

Or take another instance. Nothing is more certain than that the Apostles confidently expected the early return of their Lord. The immediacy of the Second Coming was one of the recurrent notes of their teaching, and they were constantly dwelling upon it for purposes both of warning and of encouragement. Their assurance regarding it was founded on declarations of the Master Himself, which *they* at least could interpret in no other way. Yet this anticipation, which at first was so clear, gradually lessened its hold upon the mind of the Church. How was the change brought about? Some would explain it by saying that the early Christians learned by the bitter experience of disappointment not to cherish a hope which was doomed to perpetual frustration. They ceased to proclaim a speedy Advent, because facts taught them caution; their own expectation of it grew faint and fell into the background. But had this been the only influence at work, had they merely found that what they took to be Christ's promise had not fulfilled itself, the inevitable result would have been disheartenment and slackening of energy. How were they able

to retain their faith in Him, notwithstanding repeated disillusionment on a question which seemed to them so momentous? Nay, how came it that their attachment to Him deepened as time went on? Because new conceptions of the greatness of the work which He achieved were dawning upon them through their fidelity to the life which He had imparted. Driven almost in spite of themselves to recognise the operations of His Spirit in the Gentile world, they saw before them an ever-widening opportunity of service; their eyes were opened to the needs of an ignorant and debased humanity which it was Christ's function to redeem. The Gospel which they preached acquired a richer significance for themselves when they discovered its power to reclaim men of every race; and they tasted a profounder blessedness than they had ever known in the passionate sympathy and self-sacrifice which rejoiced to bear others' burdens. Their Lord's Advent remained still the ultimate consolation of their hearts: for *then* only would the kingdom be consummated. But they no longer emphasised its immediacy: something else, they felt, must intervene. A work had to be done before the end came, and to that work they gave themselves with unquenchable fervour. "The Gospel must first be preached unto all the nations."

It was the unfolding of their own spiritual life

which altered their view of the Second Coming; which taught them not that Christ's word had failed, but that they had misconstrued it. And it was this too that recalled to them with fresh impressiveness those sayings of His which forbade curious inquiries about the Future: "Of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, not the angels that are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father"; "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority." They had attained an insight into Christian life and hope which enabled them to see that such plain declarations were intended to govern all His other utterances regarding His return.

We find here again, as in the case of the universality of the Gospel, not merely that the authority of Christ was only revealed under the teaching of the Spirit, but also *how* that teaching was communicated; that it was not something isolated, or unrelated to the varied contents of experience, but interwoven with all other influences that mould thought and character.

III.

These facts of apostolic history exemplify the condition under which alone the revelation of Christ in any age can be apprehended by the Church. Perhaps the most characteristic mark

of the Christian conscience to-day is its extreme sensitiveness on the social or humanitarian side. That it has lost something of the old poignant sense of sin as an offence against God is undoubtedly true. And grave indeed is the loss. It must sooner or later be recovered, if Christianity is not to be impoverished or imperilled. But while the Christian consciousness of duty has in its relation to God been weakened, it has been intensified to an immeasurable degree in its relation to man. Never probably in the history of the Church was the sympathetic instinct so universal, so deep-rooted, or so immediate in its operation. We are apt to think of it chiefly as manifested in quick compassion for every kind of sufferer, for the disappointed and the disheartened. But this is only one aspect of it. For it exists where the objects of it are not conscious of defeat or longing for deliverance. It is eager to help men, not because they appeal to it, but because it has a vision of their need which they themselves do not possess. In the religious sphere, a resplendent instance of this is the awakened enthusiasm for Foreign Missions. In its campaign of world-wide evangelism the Church is not animated simply by pity for the multitudes who are writhing under barbarism and tyranny. Even if a people, as yet unreached by the truth of Christ, were shown to be content with their condition, the main motive for mission-

ary work among them would still remain. It lies in this, that the Gospel which shows to me what *I* am to God, by that very fact reveals to me what *others* are to Him. The light which quickens me illumines them in my eyes as equally dear to Him; and to refuse to impart to them the best in my life which they are capable of receiving would be to betray my trust.[1] This deepened conception of Christian duty, of which the Church's missionary activity is one outgrowth, finds expression in every department of conduct. It has given to human character new susceptibilities of compassion; enjoined new ministries of self-sacrifice; waged war on arbitrary privileges; toiled to secure for the hampered and the disinherited a fair opportunity of realising their powers, and has thus ushered in a new political and social order.

How then has this higher spirit of ethical obligation been aroused in Christendom? Has it been created by the Church alone? Very far otherwise. The pioneers of the moral advance of the race have often been men who repudiated Christian doctrine, and who advocated principles of freedom, justice and humanity, when the chief spokesmen of the faith were resolute in denying

[1] "As the mounting spirit becomes more conscious of its own being, it becomes more conscious also of the bonds which unite it to its kin. The higher a man is, the closer he is drawn to the lowest, and *greatness is not an exemption, but a debt the more.*" F. W. H. Myers, *Essays, Modern*, p. 271.

them. In innumerable cases the Church has been only too content to leave things as they are, has championed social abuses and crushed those who strove to amend them. No one can deny that, with all their defects, Rousseau and Voltaire opened up springs of moral sympathy and aspiration which have refreshed and enriched our whole modern life, and which, if the Church of France had had its way, would have remained sealed. And what is true of Roman Catholicism is in its measure true of Protestant Churches also. They have too readily stood by an accepted tradition, and resented modification or development; and for accessions of new light and impulse mankind has been largely indebted to those who raised their protest from without, and whose independence of inherited dogma frequently enabled them to do fuller justice to the living facts of experience.[1]

Yet those very enthusiasms which the Church did its best to suppress have now become incorporated with its life. It has not simply admitted them as permissible; it has absorbed them, and affirmed them as dictates of the Christian spirit; it claims for them the authority of the Master. There are some who account this merely a clever device on its part, the strik-

[1] Cf. W. H. Hudson, *Rousseau*, pp. 230–235; Morley, *Voltaire*, pp. 357–360; and *Life of Gladstone*, i. 203; where see also Lord Acton's view, iii. 360–361.

ing of a compromise with the inevitable. But had it been so, had there been any inherent antagonism, as the Church once believed, between its message and the new forces of humanitarianism, the compromise would soon have been shattered. If the Church has been able to appropriate what once seemed alien and thereby to gain fresh vitality, it is only because it was not making terms with an enemy, *but coming into its own*, recognising that the Gospel it proclaimed had larger meanings than it had hitherto dreamt of. The process of its education was twofold: first, it was forced by the progressive movement of human thought and the embodiment of it in a new social environment to acknowledge that the ideas it had disavowed were in great measure true; and secondly, being driven in the light of this acknowledgment to reconsider its own specific message, it discovered to its surprise that the apparent opposition was due to a misconception, that the new truth to which it was so blind was all along latent in the teaching of Christ, and that the denial of it would be disloyalty to His purpose. Moreover, the intensified sense of the depth and range of Christian *ethic* necessarily led to a reconstruction of Christian *doctrine*. For the obligation of an endless service of humanity could only be incumbent on men, provided it had its home in the heart of God Himself. The highest human must interpret the divine. It is Christ's

own argument: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* your Father which is in heaven." The category of Fatherhood as applied to God acquired a fresh significance which altered the emphasis formerly placed on the other categories that portray Him as Creator, Ruler, Judge, and introduced more gracious elements into the whole idea of God's relation to man and of man's destiny. Thus the moral enrichment of human experience disclosed the splendour of the divine love, which in its turn revealed further and measureless possibilities of human self-sacrifice. In this way the Church came to realise that the message entrusted to it contained a more permanent and penetrating "enthusiasm of humanity" than any merely humanitarian doctrine could inspire, and that the divine sanctions of the Gospel were needed both to carry the service of man to its final point of self-abnegation, and to guard it against sentimental abuses.

It would, however, be glaringly untrue to speak of those ethical perceptions which the Church has only slowly been prevailed on to recognise, as if they had arisen apart altogether from Christianity. On the contrary, they were inherent in it: they had their origin, directly or indirectly, in New Testament teaching, and especially in the Sermon on the Mount, "where so many secret elements of social volcano slumber." But the fact remains

that they became dominant in modern life, not as an acknowledged part of the Christian system of thought, but rather in definite antagonism to that system as generally understood. It was only when they had begun to create or project new forms of social and political life, that the general Christian consciousness recognised and claimed them as its own. This does not mean that the Spirit failed to guide the Church, but that the Church failed to fulfil the conditions under which it could avail itself of the Spirit's guidance.

IV.

And just as the illuminative action of the Spirit operates through the *ethical* perceptions which have been developed in men by their whole human experience, so it is intertwined with their *intellectual* activities, and is in no small degree affected by them. A man's religious convictions take the shape of a certain set of thought; they have their place in a particular framework of mental conceptions regarding the world and God's working in it. This framework is created for him partly by inheritance and environment, and partly by the reaction of his own individuality upon the data they supply. Without it the most elementary spiritual experience would be impossible; for it would be an experience *in vacuo*, with no content or suggestion for his mind. His

spiritual faith is at every stage of his life conjoined with certain affirmations in the realms of nature and of history; and some of these may seem to him so essentially bound up with it, that it would vanish altogether with the denial of them. The scientific man and the historical student have to form their opinions in accordance with the facts as these progressively disclose themselves in their respective departments; and thus with the inevitable advance of knowledge, the results at which they arrive necessarily conflict with the scientific and historical beliefs of an earlier time, and consequently appear to conflict also with the religious creed which has become in the minds of many inseparably associated with these.

This antagonism, from the nature of the case, is an ever-recurrent and often tragical episode in the Christian Church. The condemnation of Galileo by the ecclesiastical authorities—which we are apt to smile at as a preposterous folly, instead of extracting for our own guidance the warning which it bears—was simply the struggle of faith to maintain those intellectual conceptions of the world to which in that age it seemed indissolubly wedded. To affirm that the earth was not the centre of the universe, but only, so to speak, a small and outlying province of it, appeared to imperil the doctrine of man's value to God, and of the Incarnation of the Son for his

sake. That the Copernican theory does not carry such consequences may be perfectly clear to us. Our Christian faith has become adjusted to a wholly new range of ideas. But this adjustment needs time; it is the product of the cumulative reflection of generations. Thus the mental setting which is to one age incompatible with faith becomes to a later age congruent with it, and even indispensable to it.[1]

Such a transition can never be accomplished without friction. The higher intellectual conceptions which supplant the lower are not an outgrowth of faith; they are, as it were, forced upon it from without. For instance, it was not, primarily, *religious* dissatisfaction which undermined the plenary or verbal theory of Biblical inspiration; indeed, religious belief was for a time so identified with it that it regarded any modification of the theory as dangerous to its own vitality and permanence. What compelled the surrender of it was simply the freer play of thought as directed to the books of Scripture, the keener and more searching examination of their form and content. Critical investigation showed that they bore the marks of the different epochs in which they were produced and of the varying

[1] Cf. Tennant, *Origin of Sin*, "The restatement of truths formulated in terms of the natural knowledge of long ago inevitably involves rejection of elements which had hitherto seemed to be essential to devout believers." p. 2.

individualities of their authors; that statements of fact and incident made here and there in different books could not be reconciled; that the earlier part of the Old Testament had affiliations in moral idea and social usage to the beliefs and habits of other Semitic tribes, and that God's revelation of Himself was correlated and adapted to the intellectual conditions that prevailed, and worked through them that it might transcend them. All this, of course, only gradually unfolded itself under a long process of patient and strenuous research; and naturally the conclusions were at first stoutly resisted in the interest of faith. But as the proofs multiplied, resistance was seen to be more and more hopeless; and to those who realised the cogency of the evidence, not only hopeless, but morally wrong, a refusal to recognise facts in the natural and intellectual order, which were as really a manifestation of the divine, though on a lower level, as any facts in the spiritual sphere. The problem for them, therefore, was whether belief in the Bible as a veritable record of a historical revelation of God was compatible with those disclosures of literary and historical investigation which they could not without unveracity deny. The longer they meditated on the problem, the more it was borne in upon them that the spiritual message of the Scriptures did not stand or fall with the 'plenary' view of inspiration, that these two did

not form together an indivisible whole, that the connection of the latter with the former was not inherent and essential, but accidental and separable, and that the hold which it had upon them was due to their mental training and associations. They came to perceive with ever-increasing clearness that the self-revelation of God in redemption remained for them as valid and imperative as before, though they were compelled to recognise that it had been carried through by different methods and under different conditions than they formerly imagined.

Not only so; but they found in the end that the new conception of the Bible, far from impairing its spiritual authority as the inspired Word of God, confirmed and enhanced it. For it resolved the moral perplexities attaching to some Old Testament representations of the divine action; it conduced to a higher view of the entire relation in which God stood to men, in not simply commanding from without, but working from within, and carrying on His discipline of them with unwearied patience and with ever new adaptation to their ignorance and moral need, in order that He might prepare them in the fulness of time for receiving the perfect manifestation of Himself in the Son of His love. This quickened vision of the divine is not the simple or *direct* product of the wider and truer intellectual outlook: for it is only the spiritual

man who attains to it, and he attains to it by virtue of his receptivity to the operations of the Spirit of God. His acquaintance with the findings of critical research has simply supplied new data on which the Spirit works, and thus affords him an opportunity for making fresh discoveries of divine truth. Whether he shall make them depends not on his intellectual acquirement, but on the depth and strength of his religious instinct. His communion with God may be very real, though working under inaccurate and erroneous conceptions: none the less it can only reach its purest heights through the correction of its concepts, and the correction must come from forces outside of itself. But for these he would both continue to include in the revelation what did not belong to it and fail to perceive much that it really contained. Faith, that is, if left to itself, would never know its own riches. It is the challenge which the ever-moving intellect addresses to it that leads to the disclosure.

"In the first eleven chapters of Genesis," says Canon Driver, "there is little or nothing that can be called historical in our sense of the word. . . . The concurrent testimony of geology and astronomy, anthropology, archæology, and comparative philology, is proof that the account given in these chapters of the creation of heaven and earth, the appearance of living things upon the earth, the origin of man, the beginnings of

civilisation, the destruction of mankind and of all terrestrial animals (except those preserved in the ark) by a flood, the rise of separate nations and the formation of different languages, is no historically true record of these events as they actually happened."[1] A declaration like this comes with a shock to many minds; for the repudiation of the literal accuracy of these first chapters of the Bible carries with it, in their idea, the denial of their religious value. 'Is it not the case,' they ask, 'that the author or compiler of these chapters meant them to be taken as historical, and that he himself believed that he was portraying literal facts as to the creation of the world, and the origin and early history of man? Has not the same belief been cherished both by the Jews, and practically by the whole Christian Church till a comparatively recent period? Moreover, has not the historicity of the accounts been regarded as belonging to the very substance of the faith? How, then, at this time of day can you invite men to perform the somersault of discarding the history and yet retaining the revelation which it enshrines?' Such a protest is perfectly natural: but the answer to it has already been given in the distinction drawn between religious truth and its intellectual setting or framework. The piety of a child may be as true as that of a man:

[1] Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, Introduction, p. 61.

he may have as sincere a trust in God, as real a reverence for God's authority; yet the remarks which he makes every day show what imperfect or even, as they seem to us, grotesque ideas he has of God's personality and methods of action. His mind works by pictorial representations; can work in no other way, if it is to work at all: yet through these pictures the finest qualities of devotion may be developed. If at that immature stage anyone were to tell him that these ideas were not true in a literal sense, and that they did not exactly correspond to the facts, he would feel that the *religious* ground was cut away from beneath his feet. But as his intellect expands and his experience widens, he grows out of them himself, finds it impossible to adhere to them, and passes into an entirely different sphere of mental conceptions. This intellectual transformation, however, does not necessarily imply any break with his earlier faith in its essential characteristics. The God of his manhood is the God of his childhood, the same, and yet changed: for the extension of his knowledge has provided him with fresh material of which his spiritual nature has to take account, and to which it has to adapt itself. His new outlook on the world does not mean the death of his belief, but its expansion. He retains the deepest reverence for the religion of his early days, and would resent the idea that he had abandoned it

or denied its permanent value because he had surrendered the forms of thought in which it once expressed itself.

There is a childhood of the race as well as of the individual; and these first chapters of Genesis bear the distinguishing marks of an early stage of intellectual development. The cosmogony which is there set forth is based on the idea that the earth is the central point of creation: the sun, moon, and stars are conceived as created after it, and evidently as, so to speak, subordinate to it. This is precisely the account which would be given of the universe as it appears to the eye and intelligence of man before scientific investigation has begun, and which the facts disclosed by astronomy render absolutely impossible. In like manner, the story of the Fall portrays the temptation of innocence in those concrete forms of imaginative presentation which are the mind's first method of apprehending spiritual truth. The identification of the serpent with the devil, the colloquy which it holds with Eve, the one tree whose fruit is forbidden, the garden in which God walks and where His presence in visible shape is not to be escaped,—these and a multitude of other details belong clearly to a type of thought that visualises its religious beliefs: ideas are only grasped as images. Further, the action of God in the universe is always depicted as direct, immediate. What He does He does, as

it were, *in propria persona*, and without intermediary instruments. When it is said that He formed man out of the dust, or that He made coats of skin for Adam and Eve, the expressions are intended to be taken in the most literal way. To interpret them in our modern fashion as meaning that God worked through secondary causes, either in the evolution of man's body from an inferior type of animal, or by endowing our first parents with instincts and capacities which enabled them to provide themselves with clothing, is no doubt to state the essential truth they represent, but it is to state it in a form which the writer would not have recognised or admitted. What to him was fact in his account of primeval man is to us a blending of spiritual fact and the imagery which embodies it. To call this change of view *religious* scepticism is simply a misnomer. It is not the religion in these chapters which causes us any difficulty, but the framework of thought in which the religion is set; and the difficulty is not any arbitrary creation of our own, it is thrust upon us by the uprising of irresistible evidence, as 'when a new planet swims into our ken.' The convergence of half a dozen sciences has put it out of our power to construe the antiquity of mankind as Genesis records it. It would have been as legitimate for the Apostles to refuse to be taught by the new and astonishing facts of Gentile conversion,

as for us to discard from our conception of God's revelation the witness borne by the early monuments, by differences of language and race, and by the structure of the earth itself. Wilful blindness of this kind carries a sure penalty, none the less inevitable that it may arise from a perverted idea of championing God's truth. The one final, inexorable duty of man is to live up to his light, to make the most of the materials of knowledge put at his disposal by the Supreme Wisdom. The writers of Genesis did this; they wrote as they believed; they described the facts as they themselves saw them in an age when poetry was taken for prose; they said honestly, This is how God has wrought. We too have to deal with the facts as we see them, and to acknowledge that the processes of God's operation as regards both the universe and man appear to us in another aspect; yet they are as luminous with His presence in the new form as in the old.[1]

The more one recognises the affinity of the Biblical cosmogony to the Babylonian epic of creation, the more one is impressed with its transcendent spirituality. That at so early a stage of human history, when surrounding peoples were immersed in polytheism, it should have set forth with such vividness the absolute sovereignty of God, "His priority to, and separation from, all finite material nature," the creation of the world

[1] Cf. Tennant, *op. cit.* pp. 142–143.

as due to "His purpose of good," the unique place and endowment of man as made in His image, the tragedy of man's sin as no part of the creative will of God, and the divine grace that plans to counterwork the evil which man has wrought,—all this attests its title to be called a special revelation of God. For these truths are not superseded by any subsequent revelation: they remain the fundamental and essential elements of religion in all time. Yet they have acquired a richer significance with the progressive unfolding of human thought and life. Just as the growing moral experience of the race has disclosed their wider ethical meanings, so the increase of intellectual and scientific knowledge has led to enlarged and profounder views of the divine purposes and methods of operation. The slow and gradual evolution whereby the universe has come to be what it is, and the vast antiquity of man himself, deepen infinitely our sense of the mystery of the divine working, of the marvellous wisdom that has directed the process of the ages, and the patience that in its realisation of a spiritual kingdom has adapted itself to all the stages of man's life on earth, and wrought through the lowest to the highest. This accession of religious insight and reverence would have been impossible but for the frank acceptance of the discoveries of scientific inquiry. Therefore to insist that the revelation given in these early chapters

of Genesis covers every detail of their statements, and that no distinction is to be drawn between the idea and the form in which it is clothed, is to incur spiritual loss, for it is to block the way to a fuller perception of the divine action. In the end all truth is one, and to him who is disloyal to intellectual truth some of the higher realities and significances of religious faith must remain unrevealed.

V.

Now, what in this respect is true of the revelation of God in Judaism applies also in its measure to the revelation in the Incarnate Son. For it comes to us mediated by the disciples, and thus is determined not only by the character of Him who made it, but by the capacities of those to whom it was made. What strikes one in vast stretches of Christ's teaching is its adaptation to the occasion, its opportuneness. He "considers each case by itself," lays Himself out to deal with it as if no other had to be taken account of, and is not deterred from doing so by the possibility that what He says to one man may be misapplied by another. The humanity that He addresses is the humanity immediately before Him, the men and women with whom He is brought in contact. But He addresses that which is universal in them, or rather brings out the universal relations involved in the particular instance, and reads it in

the light of what is permanent and divine. "He is not posing at every turn as though the future were listening to Him";[1] yet He is speaking to the future as well as to the present, being conscious that His message will never become obsolete, since it appeals to and meets the abiding needs of man. But He reaches the future through the present; reaches the men *that are to be* through the men *that are*. He commits nothing to writing, for the truth He declares is not a formal law, but a law of the spirit of life; it has to be vitally incorporated into human experience; it cannot start on its course as the regenerator of the world until it is in some measure embodied in human personalities. Therefore for Christ the prime necessity was to bear it home to the souls beside Him, to make it a part of their very being, so that it sustained them, while they were witnesses to it. To this end He had to subordinate everything; for if they did not receive it, there would have been no Church and no New Testament, which is the product of the Church.

This fact determined His teaching in two ways. In the first place, it rendered it inevitable that the truths which He revealed, and which were to be valid for all time, should occasionally be blended with what was incidental or local, relative to the individual addressed, or to forms of thought typical of the period. Principles of perpetual

[1] Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, p. 80.

obligation were embodied in injunctions which were not meant to be universally applicable, as in the instance of the Young Ruler; and the disentanglement is often a difficult problem of interpretation. Moreover, claiming as Christ did to be the fulfilment and crown of the Old Testament revelation, He had to use its terms and conceptions with which His hearers were familiar, and to fill them with a higher spiritual significance. This was necessary if He were to maintain His historical affiliation with the divine past of Israel. Yet it could not but give rise to much ambiguity and misconstruction. Phrases like Kingdom of God, Messiah, Son of Man, Judgment, were employed by Him with a new content which the disciples imperfectly comprehended. The old associations had a powerful hold on their minds, and could not but colour their reproduction of many of His sayings.

Secondly, and still more important: just because Christ's supreme function was not to communicate ideas, but to transform the personality, He had to employ all those methods of speech by which a teacher stimulates the interest, fires the imagination, or touches the heart. He did not deal in abstract statements, but in epigram, maxim, parable, metaphor. His words are "living creatures with hands and feet." They are suffused with feeling and imagery. They do not define,

as if the truth they express were a fixed and measurable quantity: they suggest, quicken, thrill, so that it is felt to be a practical power in life, with an endless significance of content. Hence His teaching is so largely cast in either a pictorial or an aphoristic form. For by His parables and analogies He lays hold on the actualities of daily experience, on the things which every eye can see and of which every life is full, and so presents them that they become luminous with the divine. What is most familiar and dominant in the relations or employments of the passing hour is correlated to the eternal, and the natural at every point adumbrates the spiritual. It is easy to disregard the divine when it is conceived as a theoretical truth, however conclusive the demonstration of it may seem to be, but not when it discloses itself as involved in what we *are*. It then becomes a "presence not to be put by," because the commonest incidents of every day contain intimations and reminders of it. This is what Christ has accomplished by His picturesque and analogical method of revealing God. And His aphorisms have something of the same potency. Here, too, the imaginative quality is present; but the characteristic of them is that they incarnate a spiritual truth in a vivid and memorable phrase, which is at once concrete in form and infinite in suggestion. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

"Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." "I am the bread of life." "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The power of such sayings is that they defy any exact analysis; that while they illumine, they perplex; they constitute a challenge to us to discover their meaning. We cannot get away from them, and we cannot exhaust them. They do not satisfy us in the sense of answering our questions; they rather open up visions of truth or duty covering great tracts of life, but still leave us eager to question further. By thus throwing us back upon ourselves they constitute a perpetual problem, which, in a manner, we are conscious of always solving, and yet of which the perfect solution is never reached.

It is in this form, broken, scattered, incidental, pictorial, aphoristic, sometimes bewildering in its paradox and apparent self-contradiction, that Christ delivered His message to mankind. Clearly nothing could be more unsatisfactory, if He meant to supply us with a *theoretical* knowledge of God and His relation to man. But His whole method is a perpetual warning that the knowledge of God is not a theory but an experience; that it discloses itself not to the alert and speculative mind, but to the pure heart and the disciplined will. This does not mean that feel-

ing, conscience and will, operate apart from the activity of the intellect. In the last resort man is one personality, at once intellectual, emotional, moral, volitional; and in every action that he performs all the faculties, more or less, are involved. Not one of them can be eliminated in any mental process; and it is to this total personality that religion appeals. But the appeal reaches it primarily not through its intellectual quality, but through the ethical and spiritual nature which feels, acts, aspires, and so assimilates the truth as one with itself.[1] In every case the intellect is at work, yet though operating at its highest it cannot guarantee the *personal* insight into divine realities which constitutes religion, and though operating feebly, does not exclude it. It thrilled Christ's heart with joy that the Father had so ordered it, and that the things of highest moment to all are revealed, not to the wise and understanding, but to the childlike in spirit. Therefore it is no marvel that He cast His teaching into a shape which presents many a stumbling-block to the man of logical or critical temper, but opens up its treasures of guidance to the "honest and good heart" which "wills" to obey. Humility, sincerity, loyalty, strenuous aspiration — such are the qualities which He demands from those who would learn of Him. And it is because the disciples possessed these

[1] Cf. *Life of Phillips Brooks*, by A. V. G. Allen, ii. 345.

that He promised that the Spirit would lead them into all the truth.

While, however, this spiritual receptivity and fidelity, this affinity of soul, is the indispensable condition of apprehending "the truth as it is in Jesus," the intellect has its function, none the less necessary though it be subordinate. The data of the religious life supplied by feeling and conscience only exist for us as they assume some particular form of thought. The intellect takes account of them, correlates them, and assigns to them their place in a complex whole of conceptions. It brings to this work many categories and ideas which it has derived from spheres other than the religious; and as these are changed under expanding knowledge, its construction of the religious truth likewise varies. That God created man after His own image meant for our forefathers that He created him directly and by a single act out of the dust of the earth. This was the intellectual form which the belief in man's creation by God assumed for them. They interpreted the expression "made him out of the dust" literally, for there were no facts known to them which militated against such a rendering. *We* take it metaphorically, because the science of natural history has altered our view of the antiquity of man and the relation in which he physically stands to the lower animals. Our perception that the religious truth of man's creation

does not necessarily signify a single creative act, but is as compatible with a creative process, is simply owing to the recognition of new data in the realm of nature, and to our inevitable change of standpoint.

Precisely in the same way the content which Christ's teaching carries for a man depends not on his spiritual capacity alone, but on his mental attitude and outlook, on the method of thought which has become dominant with him. No one can doubt that the solemn words spoken at the Last Supper, "This is My body," were intended to convey a truth of quite momentous import. What is it? The obvious literal construction of the phrase is given up by all, though the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation is an attempt to approximate to it, by affirming that the *substance* of the bread becomes Christ's body, but the *accidents* remain as before. Such a theory is plainly an endeavour at a compromise, conserving, as it does, as much as possible of the physically miraculous, without contravening the evidence of the senses. But it would never have been thought of, had it not been for the literalism which governed the mediæval interpretation of Scripture. What makes it incredible to us is not so much that it rests on an untenable philosophical definition of 'substance' and 'accident,' as that we have come to realise the symbolic character of our Lord's language; to see that this expres-

sion, like so many others that He uses, belongs to life and literature, and not to dogma; that it is not formal or precise, but plastic, fluid, suggestive. It contains dogma indeed, if dogma be truth for thought; but the dogma has to be ascertained through the application of the best intellectual and literary tests at our command. Not that those who worked with very imperfect canons of interpretation missed the truth which Christ sought to communicate. Far from it. That truth is the closeness of fellowship into which He enters with every sincere disciple, imparting to him His own divine strength. This union of the soul with its Lord has been experienced by Roman Catholics as deeply as by any Protestant; for the one condition of it is spiritual discernment. The fact that it was conceived by them through intellectual categories that were very inadequate, does not destroy the reality of it. Nor, though we may have attained truer conceptions of it than theirs, do we require to maintain that these are in themselves final. Just as the defects and limitations of their view have become clear to us, a later generation may discard elements in our view which seem to us important, or discern others which we have overlooked. If the Christian of the Middle Ages were to reach the spiritual truth of Christ's words at the Supper, it could only be through the belief in Transubstantiation, just as he could only retain

his faith in Christianity by believing that the sun went round the earth. *He* could not be a Christian without these beliefs: *we* could not accept Christianity with them.

Yet we should grossly err if we supposed that because of his ignorance in these particulars, he had necessarily less real knowledge of Christian truth than we. His insight into it may have been far deeper, however much of *Aberglaube* may be included in his thought of it. The piety of St. Francis of Assisi or of Thomas à Kempis has been surpassed by no saint of any Reformed Church. If it assumed shapes which we disapprove of, or lacked characteristics which we deem of primary value, that resulted not from any deficiency on the spiritual side, but from the intellectual and social conditions of their time. They were as eager to know and as ready to obey the will of Christ as the best of us can be, but they construed it differently, because they breathed another atmosphere of life and thought than ours.[1] On the other hand, there can be no greater delusion than to imagine that we can only equal the piety of the past by adhering to its intellectual forms. There are some who, lest they should lose hold of the truth altogether, try

[1] "At a certain stage in the progress of knowledge, vast services to thought and to religious life may be rendered by a theory which, in a later time, may be found to embody the spirit of truth in faulty letter." Tennant, *Origin of Sin*, p. 12.

to force themselves to acquiesce in traditional conceptions of it, which have become to them extremely doubtful or even discredited through the emergence of fresh facts or the alteration of the entire mental perspective. It is a fatal policy. It introduces a doubleness into the nature; and no genuine insight into spiritual things is possible without sincerity. But sincerity, if it is to bear its full Christian meaning, is of the whole being, of the intellect as well as of the heart. A man can only attain the highest open to him in the religious life, when he is conscious of no inward unfaithfulness or contradiction. Disloyalty to aught that attests itself to him as true tends to blind him to that which he still sees. As Coleridge says in a memorable aphorism: "He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all."[1]

The motive which leads men to look askance at any modifications required by fresh experience or research is a laudable jealousy for the authority of Christ. Yet their fear is founded on a misconception; and the course they adopt, instead of vindicating His authority, more often impairs it. Our one purpose is to get at the mind of Christ, the thing He really thought and willed. But that can only be arrived at by the *inter-*

[1] *Aids to Reflection*, Moral and Religious Aphorisms, xxv.

pretation of His teaching and life, and the interpretation will depend on the adequacy of the apparatus which we bring to it. We see in it what we have the power of seeing. Now the pictorial and enigmatic method of Christ's teaching, while supremely adapted for the conveyance of spiritual truth to those who are willing to learn, makes it on the intellectual side easily liable to misunderstanding. We are perpetually confronted with the question, How much of this is imaginative drapery, and how much is His essential thought? And the answer will vary at different stages of intellectual development. We do not interpret the saying, "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished,"[1] as the early Christians interpreted it; nor the words, "This is My body," as the mediæval Christians did. But in rejecting the idea of an immediate visible coming, or of the transubstantiation of the sacramental bread, we are not in the least repudiating the authority of Christ, we are rather discovering it; we are simply affirming that it does not warrant these ideas, and that what it does cover is the spiritual truth of which they are but the picturesque expression. And similarly, those who hold that Christ's allusions to the Old Testament are not to be taken as pronouncements on questions of authorship and historical criticism are not in any

[1] Matt. xxiv. 34.

wise disputing His teaching, but only the commonly accepted interpretations put upon it. They are denying that the passages in which these allusions occur are rightly construed when they are made to afford solutions of critical problems, which could not be within the purview of Christ's hearers. That they have come to this conclusion is due to the discovery of new facts which they cannot disavow, just as the rejection of an immediate advent, and of the dogma of Transubstantiation, was due to a widening experience and intelligence. The one process is just as legitimate as the other. If we are entitled on the ground of what we call common sense or literary criticism to affirm of this or that saying of Christ, It is to be taken pictorially, not literally, we are as entitled, on the ground of historical investigation, to say, This or that reference to Lot's wife or Moses or David or Jonah is not to be taken as scientifically accurate, but as employed according to popular usage, for the purpose of setting forth a spiritual lesson. That is true, so far as the principle involved goes ; the rightness of the particular judgment in either case is purely a matter of evidence.

It is sometimes said in deprecation,[1] But Christ "gives no hint" that His Old Testament references are to be understood in any other than the obvious sense of asserting historical facts—surely

[1] See, *e.g.*, *Life and Letters of H. P. Liddon*, p. 365.

rather a liberal application of the saying, "If it had not been so, I would have told you." Is it actually maintained that Christ might have been expected to make perfectly clear the special interpretation which He intended His words to carry; and that if we adhere to what appears to be their plain meaning, we are justified, in default of any warning to the contrary, in claiming for it the seal of His authority? How anyone could take up such a position in face of the Gospel records, may well astonish us. What about His designation of the sacramental bread as His body, and of the wine as His blood? The purely spiritual rendering of these expressions is certainly *not* the simplest or most natural, and it is just because it is not that the Roman doctrine carries a certain plausibility, and that Luther, though escaping from that, was caught in the meshes of Consubstantiation. But it is needless to dwell upon individual instances. The whole teaching of our Lord is so coloured with imagery that it turns any such canon of precise and prosaic interpretation into absurdity, and no one would have dreamt of propounding it unless engaged in special pleading. If it was not incumbent on Him to stop and say, 'I am not speaking here literally, but figuratively,' why was it incumbent on Him to say, 'This is not to be understood as a historical statement, but as an illustrative reference'?

Apparently the idea prevailing in many quar-

ters is that Christ uttered His message with full prevision of the diverse intellectual difficulties which would beset the future generations of mankind, and that He so ordered it as to take account of these. Are we, then, to suppose that He foresaw the honest misunderstandings, the perplexities, the embittered controversies to which His sacramental sayings and His apostrophe to Peter[1] would give rise? Did He, in these cases, deliberately use phrases of the most ambiguous import, knowing that they would rend His Church into sections, temporarily imperil its spiritual life, and expose it to the ridicule of the unbelieving world, when a few plain words would have largely averted the coming havoc and disruption? This is a hypothesis, as Loisy says, "disconcerting to the moral sense."[2] Yet how far are we to carry this idea of removing misunderstandings? To ask that Christ should have prevented all possibility of misconceiving His teaching, is to ascribe to Him an impracticable task. No form of human thought or expression could be devised which would be adapted equally to all times and all types of mind. Speech is relative to the hearer. In questions of duty and of religion especially, the most exact or prosaic phrase does not carry an identical content for humanity; and the modes of applying it are as manifold as the individualities of men. All, therefore, that even

[1] Matt. xvi. 18, 19. [2] *Autour d'un Petit Livre*, p. 139.

Christ could have done would have been to select the phraseology which would have met the necessities of the greatest number, to combine as far as possible what was suited to His immediate purpose of instructing the disciples with what was fitted on the whole to give occasion to the fewest misunderstandings in days to come. The very suggestion of this is its own refutation. Nothing can be conceived more unlike such a balancing between the claims of the present and those of the future than the teaching of the Gospels.

The fact is that we are conjuring up a wholly imaginary situation in representing Christ as confronted with the detailed intellectual conditions of all coming ages. Even if He had foreseen them, He could not have averted misconceptions of His meaning. His knowledge of these would thus have been a useless burden which no reader of His life can believe that the Father appointed Him to bear. And secondly, the method of teaching which He actually adopted proves that the mere prevention of misconception was not with Him a dominant consideration. No language is open to such varied constructions as the pictorial or the epigrammatic; and He persistently employed both types. But also, no language is so memorable, or so full of impressiveness and stimulus to people of every kind. That was why He chose it. It quickened the activities of mind and heart, and compelled men

to search out and appropriate the truth for themselves. Instead of making everything so plain that no one could misunderstand it, He seemed at times to insist on expressions which were calculated to perplex or to puzzle His hearers. "Who is this Son of Man?"[1] "What is this that He saith, A little while, and ye behold Me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me? . . . We cannot tell what He saith."[2] "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."[3] "And they feared to ask Him of that saying."[4] If He acted thus toward the men of His own day, what can be more foolish than to imagine that He so expressed Himself as to obviate the difficulties that might be felt in after ages? It is no argument against an interpretation of His words to say that it does not lie on the surface, or that it was unknown to earlier times and was only discovered after much inquiry and through the convergence of many kinds of evidence. Christ did not relieve His hearers of the strenuous exercise of their own powers, moral and intellectual, if they would apprehend His thought. What He demanded of them He demands of all who would follow Him; and it is through the same active response and the same readiness on their part to avail themselves of every ray of light that visits them in God's pro-

[1] John xii. 34.
[2] John xvi. 17, 18.
[3] John ii. 19.
[4] Luke ix. 45.

vidence, that His disciples in each successive generation are led of the Spirit into the truth, or in other words, into the right understanding of Christ's authority.

VI.

This principle is still more plainly seen when we consider the *history of the Church as a corporate body*. The Gospel and the Church are correlatives. The message which Christ proclaimed involved a fellowship between all who received it. They were a separate society, in the world but not of it, bound together by the closest of ties in faith and affection, and under the necessity of frequent association with one another both for devotional and practical ends. Yet the Gospels contain no outline of the Church's organisation; they prescribe for it no form of government or order of worship. A mystical affirmation of its title to bind and loose the souls of men,[1] some counsels as to the treatment of offenders,[2] and the references to Baptism and the Lord's Supper,[3] practically constitute all that Christ says on the subject; and we cannot even be sure that some of these phrases have not come to us coloured by later reflection. On this ground it has been contended that He was

[1] Matt. xviii. 18 (cf. xvi. 19). [2] Matt. xviii. 15–17.
[3] Matt. xxviii. 19; xxvi. 26 ff. (Luke xxii. 19 f.).

essentially anti-institutional; or at least that He regarded with indifference the whole question of organised forms and methods in religion. Any plausibility that attaches to such a view comes from the idea that His 'mind' concerning both the Gospel and the Church was fully expressed in His earthly teaching—an idea, as we have seen, precisely the opposite of Christ's own conception. Just because the divine society which He founded was a living fellowship, He pictured it to Himself as one which would grow in the apprehension of truth, and would have to confront problems before it gained the light by which to solve them. If He refrained from imposing on it structural rules, it was not because He imagined that it could prosper and do its appointed work without them, but because He knew it had to discover them for itself. Life precedes and determines organisation; and as the life expands, it creates for itself a more differentiated organism. Regulations propounded beforehand for a society which is to last as long as the world would be no better than a Procrustes' bed.

But the Church had no sooner started on its career than it began to shape its administrative system. The action of the Apostles in charging the "multitude of the disciples" to choose seven brethren as deacons, was due to the new situation in which they found themselves, and the need of devolving on other shoulders some portion of

the increasing duties of "ministration."[1] When controversy arose as to the conditions of admitting Gentile converts, the Council of Jerusalem issued a concordat in language which shows that it had no doubt of its right to assert for its new legislation the warrant of its divine Lord. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you."[2] A decision of this kind has a peculiar interest. It was an advance on the existing usage, but in itself had no finality. It was arrived at by the Apostles and Elders through the exercise of their own judgment as to the course which was best for the progress and unity of the Church, now that a new factor had entered into its life; yet they did not hesitate to claim for it the authorisation of the Spirit: "It seemed good *to the Holy Ghost and to us.*" Not that they meant to assert for themselves a coequal authority with the Spirit; they were "not so mad," as Chrysostom says.[3] But they believed that the mind of the Spirit uttered itself through them when they faced the problem set them with earnestness and fidelity. Probably they thought the solution a permanent one; but any mistake

[1] Acts vi. 1–4. [2] Acts xv. 28, 29. [3] *Homily* xxxiii.

they made on this point does not affect the rightness of their decision at the time. "It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak." The future must settle its own questions.

Deeper than all else in the experience of Christian believers was their consciousness of the wondrous life which Christ had mediated to them. It introduced them to a new world altogether, not only revealing higher visions of truth, but expanding their nature, awaking its latent resources, enriching it with fresh and surprising capacities. Nothing impressed them more than the variety of its manifestations. "To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits: to another divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues."[1] It is impossible to read such a passage without feeling with what reverent awe the early Christians contemplated this affluence of manifold endowment among them. For though the gifts were bestowed upon individuals, they were only given in trust for the fellowship; and to suppress any of them, either by failing to exercise one's own "gift" or by treating with

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 8–10.

indifference that of another, was to impoverish the Christian brotherhood and to grieve the Spirit, the Giver. Therefore, as partakers in common of this new spiritual life, their primary duty was to afford it free play, to welcome every manifestation of it in the members of the Church. But obviously this tended at times in practice to breed confusion. The mere possession of a gift, say of prophecy or of tongues, was not always accompanied in the possessor by the requisite wisdom as to the occasion of its use; it did not guarantee immunity from temptations to self-assertion and display. The early Christians were not less liable than their successors to the dangers of self-delusion. Precautions were needed, if Christianity were not to be discredited and the real work of the Spirit impaired. Hence the Apostle's injunction, "Let all things be done decently and in order."[1] By what means, then, did the Church secure itself against disorderly abuses?

We have to remember that the Church in apostolic and immediately sub-apostolic times was not a highly centralised body, but an aggregate of congregations of believers widely separated from one another, and, though one in faith, yet each of them self-governing. This combined unity and independence is brought out in the picture which St. Paul gives of the Church's diversified life, and the many orders of service

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

that were in operation within it.[1] First came the *Apostles*, a designation applied not only to the Twelve, but to others who had received a special call to missionary work, like Barnabas, Andronicus and Junias; the *prophets*, with their endowment of spiritual insight and inspiring utterance; and the *teachers*, to whom it belonged to give instruction in the facts and truths of the Gospel. All these were engaged in different ways in the ministry of the Word; but the Apostles had a mission relative to the Church at large, while the prophets and teachers were in some cases itinerant, in others stationary.[2] St. Paul then enumerates a *second class of gifts* which found their special sphere of exercise in the local Christian communities, such as Corinth: "miracles, gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues." The term "governments" is a reference to disciples who "by wise counsels did for the community what the steersman or pilot does for the ship."[3] So in 1 Thessalonians he speaks of those "who are over you in the Lord," enjoining the brethren to esteem them highly for their works' sake; and in Romans of those who "bear rule," whom he exhorts to diligence in fulfilling their function.[4] There is in all these

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 28: cf. Eph. iv. 11 ff.; Rom. xii. 4 ff.

[2] Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, chap. iii.

[3] Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 159.

[4] 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Rom. xii. 8.

cases a clear allusion to an order of men who in local churches had manifested the quality of leadership, and in virtue of it wielded a guiding control in their affairs. There were others also, who rendered 'helps' or subordinate service of any kind, particularly in aiding the poor or weak or outcast brethren.

St. Paul's letter shows that Church administration at Corinth was in a comparatively fluid state. There is no allusion to "bishops (episcopi) and deacons," as there is in the Epistle to the Philippians. Nothing could prove more clearly that no uniform system of polity was enjoined by St. Paul in the different churches which he founded. But the two orders described in 1 Corinthians as 'governments' and 'helps' represented at least in a germinal form what are designated elsewhere in the New Testament as presbyters (or episcopi, 'overseers') and deacons.

We have in the *Didaché*[1] (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*) a vivid picture of Church life in the sub-apostolic age, or at least in the period

[1] There is much diversity of opinion both as to where the *Didaché* was written and as to its date. Spence and others hold that it was produced in Palestine in the province of Peræa. Harnack (see his Prolegomena to the *Didaché*, p. 20, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, Band II. Heft 2) argues strongly for an Egyptian origin; and the evidence goes to show that, whether it originated in Egypt or not, it was known and used there. Most scholars assign it to a date shortly before or after 100 A.D. Dr. Lindsay agrees with Harnack in placing it subsequent to 130 A.D.

subsequent to that of St. Paul's Epistles. In some respects it reminds us of the Apostle's account of the Corinthian Church. There is the same emphasis put on the whole body of the membership as responsible for its affairs. It is they who are to judge of the qualifications of those who teach them, and who are to elect the office-bearers.[1] The itinerant 'prophets' are to be held in highest honour, and certain tests are given whereby the community can recognise whether their prophetic inspiration is genuine.[2] During their visit they take precedence of the episcopi, preside at the Lord's Supper, and in offering the Eucharistic prayer can use their own words instead of the prescribed form to which the episcopus must always confine himself.[3] All this indicates at the opening of the second century the same faith in the free operation of the Spirit, "dividing to each one severally even as He will," to which 1 Corinthians bears witness. On the other hand, the community has resident office-bearers of a definite type, episcopi and deacons, and it is expressly said that they are to be honoured also, "for they render you the service of the prophets and teachers."[4] This statement is important, because it shows the beginning of the process whereby the local supplanted the itinerant ministry. Originally the presbyters or

[1] *Didaché*, chap. xv.
[2] *Ibid.* chaps. xi., xiii.
[3] *Ibid.* chap. x.
[4] *Ibid.* chap. xv.

episcopi[1] had for their function the spiritual oversight of the people; they were the 'shepherds,' who watched over the personal character of the disciples, and gave counsel and warning. They also, along with the deacons as their assistants, received and distributed the alms of the congregation. But preaching or teaching was not one of their primary duties, and consequently many were appointed presbyters who had no gift

[1] It is generally agreed that the terms presbyter and episcopus as used in the New Testament refer to the same persons, the former name being employed to describe the office, and the latter the function of oversight discharged by the holder of it (*vide* Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 7th ed. pp. 95–99; Pressensé, *Apostolic Age*, pp. 347–348; Lindsay, *op. cit.* pp. 159 ff.). Harnack strenuously disputes this identification (*Texte und Untersuchungen*, Band II. Heft 5). Following and developing the lines laid down by Hatch in the Bampton Lectures for 1880, he argues that the episcopi had at first quite different functions from the presbyters; that while the latter were a patriarchal body composed of the older men whose duty it was to watch over the life and conduct of the members of the Christian community, the episcopi were administrative *officials* in the strict sense of the phrase, who were appointed for the purpose (1) of managing the financial affairs of the congregation, and in particular of attending to the needs of the poor; and (2) of taking charge of the public worship. The episcopi as such were inferior in dignity to the presbyters; but as individual presbyters were often chosen to be episcopi, those so chosen soon came in virtue of their dual function to be the leading members of the presbyteral board and the chief officials of the congregation. Harnack's theory has not as yet found any wide acceptance. The practical result of it, however, is much the same as on the generally received view with regard to the main point: namely, that in the sub-apostolic days a Christian community was ruled by a *body* of men who were called either presbyters or episcopi according to the aspect in which they were regarded, and that therefore the monoepiscopus was a later creation. For a criticism of Harnack's position, see *Encyc. Bibl.* i. 580, iii. 3135 ff.; Lindsay, *op. cit.* pp. 369 ff.

for it. But we see that gradually in the absence of prophets, or owing to the pretensions of those who falsely claimed to be such, the preaching of the Word became one of the ordinary functions discharged by the resident officials; and as a matter of fact the prophetic ministry disappeared from the Church in the course of the second century.

The same century witnessed another change of a far-reaching nature from the type of Church life that characterised the sub-apostolic period. In the *Didaché* the bishops form the ruling body of the community; there is no hint of a single official holding supremacy. But the Ignatian Epistles, written only a few years earlier or later,[1] assert the authority of the bishop in the most explicit fashion. The presbyters indeed form a council under him, and are "as the chords to the lyre." Yet he stands always first and centre of all. "Let no man do anything pertaining to the Church without the bishop."[2] It is difficult to know how far the extravagant claims made by Ignatius for the mono-episcopate are to be interpreted as representing actual and acknowledged facts in the Church, or what deductions

[1] The martyrdom of Ignatius took place about the year 107 A.D. For the date of the *Didaché*, see *ante*, p. 405.

[2] *Ad Smyrn.* viii. His language is very strong: *πάντες τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ ἀκολουθεῖτε, ὡς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τῷ Πατρί, καὶ τῷ πρεσβυτερίῳ ὡς τοῖς ἀποστόλοις. . . . μηδεὶς χωρὶς ἐπισκόπου τι πρασσέτω τῶν ἀνηκόντων εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.* See also *Ad Ephes.* vi.

have to be made for his highly emotionalised and imaginative expressions. He was a mystic, and writes in the language of a passionate spiritual symbolism. Making all allowance for this, however, his letters prove not only that the threefold order of ministry was already existent in many churches of Asia Minor, but that the episcopal office was gathering to itself there an exceptional reverence. Yet practically at the same time a very different ecclesiastical polity obtained elsewhere. In the churches of Egypt, as we have seen, there was no monarchical bishop, nor is there any reference to one in the Epistle of Clement to Corinth, or in that of Polycarp to Philippi: both writers speak only of presbyters and deacons.[1] But while this diversity of administration prevailed in the beginning of the second century, before the end of it the threefold order had become almost universal. It seems as if the change were effected with comparatively little friction; at least the imperfect data we possess point that way. The steps in the transition are very obscure; though it is not difficult to see that many causes were at work which must have contributed to produce it.

In the case of churches where the ruling authority was a body of presbyters, with equal rights and privileges, no long time would elapse

[1] Cf. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, pp. 205, 215. For a succinct summary of the evidence, see Sanday, *Expositor*, 3rd Series, vol. v. pp. 3–5.

before the practical disadvantages of such a system of administration would be felt. Certain of the presbyters would display more fitness for the office than others; as "wise men" their counsels would be increasingly deferred to by the community. Therefore they would be oftener called to preside at the meetings of the presbyteral college, and especially at the observance of the Lord's Supper, when the alms of the congregation were presented. The natural tendency would be to acknowledge one man as specially qualified to officiate *primus inter pares.* This must have been enormously accentuated by the spiritual necessities of the Church, exposed as it was both to persecution from without and to false teaching within. Effective resistance to these dangers could best be secured by the recognition of one presbyter who was deputed to speak and act on behalf of the Church; who stood out as its head and representative, when its interests were threatened by the civil power, or when Gnostic and other heretical teachers under the guise of prophets began to perplex the faithful. Moreover, as frequent intercommunion took place between the different Christian communities by means of visits and letters, it was obviously convenient that this work of delegation and correspondence should fall to some outstanding presbyter; and this additional function, constituting him the spokesman of his church to disciples

outside, would give him a still further prominence. Nor can we leave out of account the effect produced on those communities which preserved the purely presbyteral arrangements by the example of others which possessed the threefold order, especially perhaps of the mother Church of Jerusalem where James had held a presidential position. Experience showed that the unity of the local Christian fellowship was better realised when there was a recognised head like Ignatius at Antioch or Polycarp at Smyrna.

These and other influences tending to the creation of the mono-episcopate, though at work everywhere, operated differently in different places. Personal, local and racial factors all entered in; and so we find a single episcopus in the churches of the East at a time when no trace of him exists in Greece or Egypt or Gaul, and when in many cases there is definite evidence that the ecclesiastical administration was collegiate.[1]

In view of such divergences of usage, which every fresh document of the early Church that comes to light only makes more certain, it is vain to talk, as Rothe does,[2] of a council of the surviving Apostles, held immediately after the

[1] *E.g.* Polycarp's Epistle, which shows that in the Philippian Church there was no chief bishop, was practically contemporary with the Ignatian Epistles.

[2] *Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche*, pp. 354 ff.

martyrdom of St. James and the fall of Jerusalem, at which a decree was passed ordaining the episcopal type of Church government as bearing the specific authority of Christ. Had there been an apostolic ordinance to this effect, Clement of Rome could not have been ignorant of it, and Irenæus and other champions of a direct succession from the Apostles would have used it as the strongest weapon in their armoury.[1] That the rise of the episcopal office in Asia Minor was due to the influence or sanction of St. John is indeed an early tradition. But it is after all no more than a hypothesis; and even if true does not carry us very far. He may readily have approved of the appointment of one chief presbyter as the best method of controlling the irregularities that threatened disruption in these Gentile churches, but this does not imply that he regarded such an arrangement as imperatively required everywhere. Still less would it imply that he attributed to the office of episcopus the sacerdotal character afterwards ascribed to it, as the sole source of valid ordination. To suggest that he did so, in face of the Johannine writings

[1] *Vide* Gwatkin, art. on Church Government in Hastings' *Bible Dict.* i. 441. "Ignatius certainly uses the most emphatic language in urging obedience to the bishop; but the greater his emphasis the more significant is the absence of any appeal (*Trall.* 7 is not one) to any institution of an *order* of bishops by the apostles. The absence of an argument which would have rendered all the rest superfluous, seems nothing less than an admission that he knew of no such institution."

in the New Testament and of all the known facts regarding the slow growth of the theory of apostolic succession, is more courageous than plausible. But let us for the moment suppose that St. John did, in his old age, become possessed with the notion of a sacerdotal episcopus, would anyone accept that as finally determining the question of Church government? If the other leading Apostles all passed away without any hint that they shared his opinion, would we think it likely that Christ during His earthly life said a word on the point, or that subsequently by His Spirit He vouchsafed a special illumination to St. John? To rest not only the whole organisation of the Church, but the whole conception of its distinctive character, on the hypothetical verdict of one aged Apostle, is to attempt to base a pyramid on its apex.

It is necessary to dwell at some length on this problem of Church administration, *because it is here that the false conception of Christ's authority has historically had the most disastrous results.* His will regarding the Church as an organised body was not revealed in explicit instructions delivered by Him either as the Incarnate One or as the ascended Head. The guidance of the Spirit promised to the disciples applied to the ordering of Church polity only in the sense in which it applied to every sphere of personal or of corporate duty. That is to say, it was bestowed

upon them to meet the needs of the hour; but it only availed them so far as they fulfilled the requisite conditions. They had to take account of circumstances, to keep an open eye for new facts, to rise above vanity and self-assertion, and to realise their constant dependence on their living Leader. The edict issued by the Apostles at the Jerusalem Council, so adapted to the occasion and yet so soon to be superseded, shows how utterly unfounded is the idea that they started with a definite framework of rules as to Church method and organisation. If in the course of the century subsequent to the apostolic age the ministry was transformed, that was simply because a different situation had arisen. The disappearance of the prophets, who shared with the Apostles the highest place of authority, and the concentration of power in the hands of the local ministry and in particular of its president, sprang inevitably from causes which only slowly disclosed themselves.

The itinerant character of the prophet's work did not supply that continuous instruction of which each church stood in need. His message would not always commend itself to the resident presbyters, and so they would in certain cases resent his intrusion. Sometimes his office would be assumed by men who had no real title to it.[1] Quite apart, therefore, from the question whether

[1] See *Didaché*, chap. xi.

'prophetic' utterance was one of the special gifts conferred on the apostolic Church and soon withdrawn, various considerations led to its early cessation, and to the consequent emphasis put on the permanent ministry of each congregation, as the constituted authority both in teaching and in supervision. And the concurrent development within that ministry of the episcopal office is no doubt rightly explained by Jerome, when he says that at first the churches were governed by a council of elders, but that afterwards one elder was elected to be placed over the rest as a remedy against schism, that each might not create a personal following and so "break up the Church of Christ."[1]

It is difficult for us to realise how great was the change which was thus effected. The prophet like the Apostle received his appointment by a subjective call: he held his office by virtue of the gift conferred upon him by the Holy Spirit, and required no authorisation from man.[2] That this liberty of prophesying was open

[1] Jerome's words are: "Idem est ergo Presbyter qui et Episcopus, et antequam diaboli instinctu studia in religione fierent, et diceretur in populis, Ego sum Pauli, ego Apollo, ego autem Cephæ, communi Presbyterorum consilio ecclesiæ gubernabantur. Postquam vero unusquisque eos quos baptizaverat suos putabat esse, non Christi, in toto orbe decretum est ut unus de Presbyteris electus superponeretur cæteris, ad quem omnis ecclesiæ cura pertineret, et schismatum semina tollerentur." *Comm. in Epist. ad Titum*, Benedictine ed., vol. vii. pp. 694–695.

[2] Cf. Gayford, Hastings' *Bible Dict.* i. 435.

to abuse is manifest, and the only safeguard against it lay in the "gift" of discerning the spirits, of distinguishing the true from the false, possessed by the Christian community as a whole. It can hardly be disputed that an orderly Church life and teaching could not be permanently secured on these lines; and that the Church was wisely guided in vesting the control of its affairs in the local office-bearers formally appointed, with an acknowledged head.[1] But in making the transition, the Church gradually came to attribute to the episcopus the *charisma veritatis* which belonged to the Apostle and to the prophet, so that the "gift" which was bestowed by the Spirit on this or that individual, "dividing to each one severally even as He will," became the appanage of an

[1] Montanism, in its contention for the permanence of the prophetic office, was in some respects nearer to Apostolic Christianity than the "Great Church" which excommunicated it. It was really a protest on behalf of the *spiritual* character of the Church against an encroaching secularism in Christian life, and an overbearing officialism. Yet, if we can trust the accounts of it which have come down to us chiefly from antagonistic sources, it is clear, as Pressensé says, that "it was not compatible with a Church which was to live and assume an organised form: it opened the door to all that was visionary, and left no basis for a religious association" (*Early Years of Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 103). Identifying spirituality with the ecstatic and supra-normal, Montanism was blind to the necessary conditions of a progressive development. It had many of the excellences of a 'revivalist' movement, and more than its usual defects. *Vide* Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma*, ii. 104 ff.: cf. the interesting discussion between Dr. Sanday and Prof. Rendel Harris in the *Expositor*, 3rd Series, vol. v. pp. 109–110, 231–235.

office.[1] From this point the aggrandisement of the episcopate proceeded at an increasing ratio, until the simple historical facts that a regular succession of office-bearers had existed since the Apostles' time, and that they had handed on the deposit of the Apostles' doctrine, were made the basis of the full-blown theory of apostolic succession, that curious blend of Jewish sacerdotalism and Roman legalism.[2] We do not need to ascribe the prevalence of this theory to the ambitions of ecclesiastics, though these were not absent. We can see how it arose quite naturally as the honest conviction of Christians in the second and third centuries, when the paramount necessity for the Church seemed to be a centralised authority, and no authority was likely to establish itself unless it bore the holiest sanctions. But none the less we are entitled to say that in this matter they mistook the mind of Christ, and that the episcopate as they construed it was no part of His intention. That they erred need not astonish us: for, as Dr. Gore says, "Christ has guaranteed the permanence in the world of the grace and truth which came by Him. But He never came near to guaranteeing His Church against misuses of ecclesiastical authority akin to those which rendered the Scribes and Pharisees and chief priests so wholly inadequate for the fulfil-

[1] See Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma*, ii. 69; Lindsay, *op. cit.* p. 280.
[2] Lindsay, *op. cit.* chap. vii.

ment of their divine function."[1] Dr. Gore, in drawing this distinction, is engaged in repudiating the mediæval dogma of Transubstantiation, which, he declares, was constructed and formulated without the requisite appeal to the teaching of the New Testament as the one safeguard of truth. Yet he tells us that the early Fathers were most careful to make this appeal. How he can venture to assert this regarding their doctrine, which he so eagerly champions, of the sacerdotal character and apostolic succession of the episcopate, is hard to understand. They *quoted* Scripture indeed, but their exegesis was controlled by a tradition which they read into it. The real basis on which they rested the doctrine was that it had come down to them in unbroken continuity from the Apostles. But they never proved this, and could not prove it, out of Scripture; and all recent investigation into early Church life shows the absurdity of their contention *as a matter of history*. And if the Church gravely erred in the thirteenth century,[2] it was no less liable to error in the second or third.

The attitude taken in some quarters to the Patristic Church is nothing short of abject idolatry. Because the early Fathers stood comparatively near to the origin of Christianity, their

[1] *The Body of Christ*, p. 224.

[2] The dogma of Transubstantiation was defined by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D.

verdicts are treated with superstitious reverence, as if they must have had a deeper insight into it than later generations. The very reverse is the case. When the creative period of Christianity had passed away, and men were called to think and act under the *normal* guiding of the Spirit, those who came early were by no means the most likely to judge wisely. Having received the life-giving message of the Gospel, they had suddenly to adjust its relation to types of thought and social usages which had been created under other conditions. They had no long background of experience to guide them, witnessing to the results in human character and society of this or that form of Christian faith as fraught with blessing or danger. They had to walk by an untrodden way; and if their Christian conceptions became leavened with alien influences, this was only what might have been anticipated. Yet what they determined in the first few generations tended to become stereotyped. When, then,—recognising the extreme complexity of the problem which the Patristic Church was set to solve, with immature experience and with imperfect intellectual instruments, and knowing what we now do of the variety of organisation which existed in the sub-apostolic churches,—we are asked to accept the doctrine of apostolic succession on the testimony of the Fathers, unsupported by anything in the New Testament itself, "we like not

the security." There is no presumption in saying that we to-day are in a much better position than they were for understanding the mind of Christ and His Apostles as to the true nature of the Church. The Spirit is no less a gift to us than to them. Our knowledge of the New Testament is incomparably greater than theirs. We have a saner exegesis of it,[1] a vastly more accurate appreciation of its historical setting. Indeed it may be said that up to the Reformation the Scriptures had not a fair chance of telling their own story; they were only known through the interpretations of sacerdotal authorities. But since then, and increasingly, they have been studied with every appliance of intellect, learning and spiritual insight. If the appeal to them is, as Dr. Gore says, the one safeguard against erroneous ecclesiastical teaching, then that safeguard is observed to-day as it never was or could be by the Patristic Church. Moreover, we have what is of the first importance, the judgment of the centuries on the working of dogmas; we discern their practical outcome, their logical implications.[2] Hence, for example, Cyprian's

[1] Examples of their fantastic exegesis and of their method of arguing are given by Middleton in his famous *Free Inquiry*. See also Farrar's Bampton Lectures on the *History of Interpretation*, Lect. IV.

[2] Cf. Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 29. "The highest and most wonderful truths, though communicated to the world once for all by inspired teachers, could not be comprehended

claim for the hierarchical authority of the bishop is doubly discounted. We see the preposterousness of asserting for it the sanction of St. Peter or St. Paul, and we see, also, that if his claim for the autocracy of the local bishop be right, it leads inevitably not only in logic but in *fact* to the autocracy of one universal bishop. Unwittingly to himself and sorely against his intention, Cyprian paved the way for the absolutism of the Papacy.

It is needful to make clear, however, in what sense the appeal to the Scriptures as authoritative is to be understood. They record for us the creative period of the Christian faith, *i.e.* (1) what Christ Himself taught regarding the new life which He mediated to men, and the communion into which He called His disciples with Himself and with each other; and (2) what those disciples actually found by experience that they had gained through Him. Now the fundamental characteristic of the Church, or body of believers, in the New Testament presentation is that it is a spiritual fellowship, in which each member holds a direct relation to Christ as Head, and devotes his special gift to the nourishment of the common life; a fellowship in which all are brethren under the one Master, whose Spirit dwells in them.

all at once by the recipients, but, as being received and transmitted by minds not inspired, and through media which were human, have required only the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation."

No better summary of it could be given than that of St. Paul, "And He gave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."[1] There is the utmost diversity of function: yet the function is always of one kind, that of service, not of lordship. "What is Apollos? And what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him."[2] No Church accords with the Scriptural ideal which violates the principle of Christian brotherhood, and gives to one dominion over the faith of others. Spiritual equality in Christ, interdependence, and mutual helpfulness,—these are essential notes of the New Testament Church.

But we quite misuse the appeal to the Scriptures, if we imagine that they supply us with a final organised form for the realisation and manifestation of this fellowship. What they portray for us as indispensable is the character of the new Christian society, its origin, its type, its laws and conditions. These are all spiritual, not formal. But the method of administration is variously set forth; in 1 Corinthians it seems comparatively

[1] Eph. iv. 11–13. [2] 1 Cor. iii. 5.

undeveloped, in Acts and the Pastoral Epistles we read of definite functionaries,—presbyters and deacons. Throughout the whole New Testament period the Apostolate exercises a unique authority. An exact reproduction of the Church polity then existing is impossible, because it was plainly in a transitional state. Yet there are those who think that the adoption of any arrangements in worship or government not warranted by Scriptural *precedent* is illegitimate. This is really to observe the letter of the New Testament at the expense of the spirit. The Apostolic Church itself shows a development in organisation, by its appointment of the Seven to answer the demands of a new situation; and if we are to follow its example it must be, not by making a slavish copy of its methods, but by acting on its principles.

Moreover, as Hooker shows in his great argument, Scripture is not meant to be the *exclusive* guide of human conduct.[1] Its function is not to supersede other sources of light in reason and experience which God vouchsafes to us; it cannot even be rightly understood unless these other means of illumination are assigned their due place. If this is not done, misconceptions of its meaning are inevitable: that which is secondary in its teaching becomes confused with what is primary; phrases that have a merely temporary

[1] *Eccles. Polity*, Bk. ii.

application are turned into permanent obligations; usages are solemnly upheld and continued into an age when they become anachronisms, and the imperious duties of the present hour remain undischarged. All these results follow from treating the New Testament as a statute-book. Few things are more pathetic than the resolute adherence of some pious souls to what they count the simplicities of early Christian observance, under the impression that they, and they alone, represent amidst the general defection the mind of Christ, when in reality they are doing less than almost any of their neighbours to commend His Gospel to living men and women.

As Christianity spread throughout the nations, and was called to confront the manifold necessities of a complex society, it could not have performed its mission if it had refused to change in any particular the administrative system with which it began. Ecclesiastical polity is a branch of applied ethics; it is not an end in itself, but a means for giving a more complete and effective expression to the life and work of the Christian brotherhood. Therefore the Church is not only at liberty to change it, but may under certain circumstances be under an obligation to do so, if it is to accomplish the primary purpose for which it exists. Only, it must see that the change *does* really help to express its characteristic life, not suppress or pervert it. The condemnation of

episcopacy as expounded by Cyprian and his successors is not that it was a new form of government for which there was no precedent, but that it introduced elements incompatible with the true character of Christian fellowship, that its autocratic and hierarchical pretensions were entirely alien to the type of corporate life presented by Christ and His Apostles, that it involved a narrowing and de-spiritualising of the Church, by putting emphasis on what was not indispensable, and by excommunicating those who, on apostolic grounds, belonged to the visible "body of Christ."[1]

[1] Here lies the weakness of the Abbé Loisy's argument on ecclesiastical development. In his two books, *L'Évangile et L'Église* and *Autour d'un Petit Livre*, he insists that the Gospel was a divine principle, a new spiritual life which entered humanity under the limited forms of Jewish thought and experience, and which has from age to age had to create for itself new forms, as regards ecclesiastical organisation, doctrine and worship, in accordance with the varying needs of human intelligence and social circumstance. "L'Église" (the Roman Catholic Church) "n'était pas seulement la suite inévitable, mais la suite légitime de l'Évangile" (*Autour* etc., Préf. p. 27). But it is precisely the *legitimacy* of this evolution which the Abbé never proves. The Christian principle, he says, has found "dans les rencontres de l'histoire les occasions, les excitants, les adjuvants, la matière de son propre développement" (*Autour* etc., p. 47). If anything is certain, it is that some of these changes have had nothing to do with its own *characteristic* development; have been alien accretions, not natural growths. One can see well enough how the doctrine and polity of the Papal Church have come to be what they are "through contact with history"; but one would like to have some demonstration of their congruity with the "Christian principle" as set forth in the New Testament.

Apart from this sacerdotal claim, it is perfectly permissible to argue that episcopacy, as a form of administration, was a right development of the corporate life of believers, just as it is allowable to hold that Congregationalism, which was the first stage of Church organisation, was rightly superseded by a method resembling modern Presbyterianism.[1] It is no disproof of the wisdom of *Diocesan* Episcopacy as it now exists that it was not 'primitive,' and "did not grow up until the 6th–9th centuries, when it took shape mainly in France under the Merovingian and Carolingian kings";[2] nor, even if it were wise in the mediæval period, is it any proof that it should continue in all circumstances. That polity is best which most fully exhibits and confirms the unity of the whole Christian fellowship; which maintains order and discipline, while doing justice to the inalienable rights of individual liberty; which enlists the interest and service of the entire membership for the common edification, and for the evangelisation of the world. These are rules which the Church must observe, just because they are laws of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. But it does not follow that their observance can best be attained throughout Christendom by a uniform system. Quite otherwise indeed: for

[1] See Sanday, *Expositor*, 3rd Series, vol. viii. p. 335.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 113: cf. Hatch, *Organisation of the Early Christian Churches*, Lecture VIII.

the differences among men in temperament and mental type, in heredity and training, enter of necessity into the matter. One puts the accent on liberty, another on order; one on the function of the individual, another on the Church as a corporate body; one attaches more importance to usages which have become consecrated by time, another is more sensitive to what seems the need of his own day. All these factors are acknowledged by each of them, but in diverse proportions. There is an affinity between the Church government which a man approves and his idea of civil polity.[1] In the early centuries Roman imperialism reflected itself in the ecclesiastical sphere. It is not an accident that Russia is autocratic both in Church and State, or that a democratic or representative ideal of Church administration so largely prevails among the free and self-governing peoples. Nor is it any disparagement to the Church that it should be so. Is *it* to be the only institution that declines to take account of the developing thought and widening experience of mankind? If a nation remains itself through many modifications of its working constitution, why should the Church of Christ sacrifice its identity because it shows the intelligence and the practical judgment to modify or reconstruct its arrangements for the better discharge of its functions? To say that it is

[1] Cf. article by Harnack in *Contemp. Review*, Dec. 1904.

"anchored" irremovably to a system which is largely stamped with the absolutism of an earlier time is to write it down as inadequate to its age-long task. *Semper eadem* is a noble motto for its spiritual message, but a ruinous one for its type of administration : for in the practical sphere not to change is to become feeble or effete.

Hence the polity which commends itself to us to-day as most correspondent with the essential teaching of the New Testament would not necessarily have been most suitable centuries ago. Even if it be more spiritual than that which then obtained, it might have been "too good to live," or to do its proper work. The 'pædagogic' character of God's government of the world was not limited to the Old Testament dispensation : and what to us would be an anachronism may have carried a divine significance to a former generation. While, then, we repudiate the attempt to impose upon us the ecclesiastical order of patristic or mediæval times, and claim the right in Christ's service to be true to ourselves and to our appointed place, we ought ever to remember in our verdicts on past ages that it is not so easy to judge of others' duty as to perceive our own.

There are some who will regard such a view as a dissipation of Christ's authority in any real meaning of the term. They will denounce it as an uncontrolled subjectivism, in which every man

does what seems right in his own eyes, and asserts for it the sanction of the Lord. What they desiderate is an objective standard in the shape of divine commands, untouched by any fluctuations or vicissitudes of human thought and life. Only by this means, they hold, is there any guarantee for the perpetuation of the Church or of Christian faith. But what security is there, even on their hypothesis, that mankind will not some day universally renounce the Gospel of Christ? Is it merely that the Church *claims* to have a commission to declare, 'This is the revealed truth'? Certainly not. A claim is nothing unless it can justify itself to the best judgment of men: and the higher it is, the more eagerly will its credentials be scrutinised. Therefore in the end the one guarantee for the perpetuity of Christianity in the world is its adaptation to human nature. The only security against its disappearance is that man is so made as inherently to require it; that they are fitted to each other like the halves of the ancient tessera, and that what God has joined cannot finally be put asunder.

The abiding claim of Christ to our allegiance is that He, and He alone, by His life and preeminently by His death, has fully disclosed to humanity the redemptive purpose and the redemptive *action* of God. But inasmuch as the disclosure, while valid for all time, has been made

in a Historic Life correlated to the environment of a particular age, the eternal truth embodied in Christ is perpetually undergoing re-interpretation under the changing conditions of humanity. Since it is by the will of God that man is subject in every part of his nature to the law of development, and since it is the redemption and consecration of that nature in its totality which Christ came to achieve, man's apprehension of the Incarnate verity cannot but vary with the form and content of his intellectual and ethical experience. What he sees, he must see with his own eyes in that definite concrete shape which makes it the illumination of his individual life. The doctrine of the Spirit is, therefore, the indispensable correlate of a historical Incarnation: it simply means that He who at a consummating epoch of the world's history gave His Son, has not left subsequent ages of mankind without that divine guidance which would enable them to realise afresh for themselves the imperative significance of Christ's mission. The guidance, however, only avails for those who prepare themselves to receive it; and this preparation is of the whole personality which Christ claims for His service. Hence an individual, or for that matter an entire generation, may seriously misunderstand the Incarnate revelation. But that revelation, nevertheless, stands there permanently recorded in the New Testament, and another age discovers

in it what had been unperceived or obscured; discovers it not by passive acceptance of an ecclesiastical pronouncement supposed to be infallible, but by active self-discipline, by humility and reverence, by loyalty to every light of experience. There is an ever-repeated demand in humanity for a formal instructor, whether person or book; but history must have written itself in vain for us, if it has not taught us the futility of the desire. The measure in which we shall comprehend the true authority of Christ will be in proportion as we keep life on all its sides, intellectual as well as moral and spiritual, true to the highest.

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